

AFRICA RECOVERY

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Africa beyond famine

*New strategies needed to combat
hunger, disease and rural poverty*

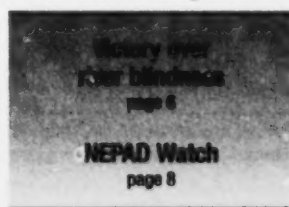
By Ernest Harsch

Africa today suffers from a "deadly triad" of interrelated burdens — food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and a reduced capacity to govern and provide basic services — says UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Therefore, a "new, integrated response from both the governments of Africa and the international community" is needed, he told the Group of 8 (G-8) industrialized countries in early March. That means taking long-term development measures at the same time as giving immediate relief to people suffering from famine, he said.

At the beginning of the year, some 25 million Africans required emergency food aid, but quick relief shipments have since eased the threat of starvation in most countries of Southern Africa.

To many around the world, the image of famine in Africa is closely linked to drought and, in some countries, war. But even when there is no drought or other acute crisis, about 200 million Africans suffer from chronic hunger, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director-General Jacques Diouf noted during a recent visit to Senegal. The reasons are

multiple: low farm productivity, grinding poverty, the ravages of HIV/AIDS and unstable domestic and international agricultural markets.



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Africa's recurrent cycles of famine can only be broken by long-term strategies to help African farmers increase their productivity, combat the effects of AIDS and other diseases and improve the external conditions for the continent's agricultural exports.

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Africa seeks own solutions to conflict

Burundi, Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire on peace agenda

By **Gumisai Mutume**

In a further demonstration of increasing African resolve to tackle the continent's numerous conflicts, South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique announced in early April that they are ready to deploy 3,500 troops for an African peacekeeping mission to the war-torn East African country of Burundi.

South African President Thabo Mbeki noted that his country's contribution is in the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the continent's new development framework. Announcing Ethiopia's troop contributions, Defence Minister Abadula Gameda said his country would "do everything possible to bring about lasting peace in Burundi."

The countries first pledged to assist the Burundi mission at an extraordinary summit of the newly constituted African Union (AU), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February. Burundi's decade-long civil war, which has taken some 200,000 lives, was one of several conflicts that came under scrutiny. The summit of 28 heads of state and six prime ministers noted that part

full-blown wars. The Council also would be authorized to help in post-war reconstruction.

Once set up, it would have powers to mediate conflicts and "institute sanctions whenever an unconstitutional change of government takes place," notes the Peace and Security Council protocol. In Addis Ababa, leader after leader stressed the need for reinvigorated efforts to end wars in Africa. Numerous conflicts, including those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar and Sudan, formed part of the agenda of the meeting.

Central Africa takeover

Just a few weeks after the AU summit, an unfolding crisis in the Central African Republic came to a head on 15 March when rebel leader François Bozizé seized power and declared himself head of state. General Bozizé, a former army chief-of-staff, had previously launched an unsuccessful bid for power in October 2002, but was repelled by Libyan troops guarding then president Ange-Félix Patassé. The Libyans withdrew earlier this year and were replaced by

Shaky peace in Côte d'Ivoire

Attention is now also focused on Côte d'Ivoire. If a peace agreement signed in January fails to hold, war could spill over into neighbouring countries, further aggravating the conflict's regional impact.

The civil war that erupted in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002 following an army mutiny has created a major humanitarian crisis in West Africa, with hundreds of thousands of people, especially migrants from neighbouring countries, forced to flee in the wake of growing xenophobic attacks. Since Côte d'Ivoire is a major regional economic hub, accounting for some 40 per cent of the gross domestic product of Francophone West Africa, the conflict has already seriously disrupted trade and other economic activities in several of its neighbours.

Under the terms of the January peace accord, a government of national unity was established. It includes members of the ruling party of President Laurent Gbagbo, the main rebel group (the Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Movement) and other political parties and rebel forces.

But the peace remains shaky. There have been disagreements over the distribution of cabinet posts and the January peace accord was greeted by a week of anti-French and anti-rebel demonstrations in parts of the country. Only on 3 April was the full coalition cabinet able to meet.

"The process is still fragile and must be consolidated," UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told heads of state at the Paris conference on Côte d'Ivoire in January. The success of the peace agreement, he noted, depends to a large extent "on the adoption of measures to build trust and confidence between the parties."

A number of UN officials have condemned the human rights abuses perpetrated by both sides in the conflict, including the use of death squads. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira de Mello warned in December that if they escape the reach of national law, the International Criminal Court would still hold perpetrators responsible for their actions. He warned especially against the use of the media to propagate xenophobia and promote hate crimes. The international court, he warned, was also capable of presiding over "the human rights violations of journalists." ■



African peacekeepers in Bangui, Central African Republic.

of the solution to the continent's conflicts lies in granting the AU significantly more powers than its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, which was often criticized as too bureaucratic and ineffective in preventing or settling wars.

The summit participants resolved to ratify as soon as possible a protocol creating a Peace and Security Council within the AU. Often referred to as the African equivalent of the UN Security Council, it would consist of 15 countries elected in rotation and eventually be able to draw on a stand-by African military force. An early warning mechanism would help the Council to anticipate and prevent conflicts before they become

300 troops from the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States, who were not in a position to prevent the March takeover.

While thousands of residents of the capital, Bangui, turned out in support of the coup, the UN Security Council and the AU swiftly and strongly condemned it. The Security Council called on the country's leaders to begin a "genuine, political, all-inclusive dialogue ... and ensure the early restoration of democracy."

General Bozizé proceeded to appoint a 28-member transitional government with members from all political parties and civil society. His government announced a transitional period of one to three years, leading to elections.

Changing tradition to safeguard women

Villagers join campaigns against female genital mutilation

By Nirit Ben-Ari

Residents of 10 Senegalese villages rallied in late October in Némanning, near the Gambian border, to openly discuss the generations-old practice of cutting girls' genitals. Joined by the local prefect, representatives of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and parliamentary deputies from both Senegal and Gambia, the participants shared their experiences of a year-long education programme in which they learned about human rights and women's health, especially the risks and dangers of female genital mutilation. The participants indicated that they soon plan to abandon the practice — long known as female genital mutilation (FGM), female circumcision or excision, and in recent years also as female genital cutting.

that we have never asked people to stop female genital cutting," Tostan Director Molly Melching told *Africa Recovery*. The programme teaches about human rights and the practice's health risks. Tostan calls this phase of the programme *kobi*, which in the Mandinka language means "to turn over the soil in preparation for planting." Usually, participants then come to the decision to abandon the practice on their own.

Health implications

Around the world, an estimated 2 million girls are subjected to genital cutting each year. In sub-Saharan Africa, the practice is prevalent in 28 countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies four types, depending on the extent of cutting and the use of other proce-

Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Tanzania and Togo. In Nigeria it is prohibited under federal law and in Sudan only the most severe forms are banned. In Kenya, a presidential declaration has denounced the practice, and in one case a Kenyan father received an injunction to not have his daughters undergo FGM. But changing the law has its limitations. Even in these countries, the practice remains widespread.

Breaking the silence

Despite the suffering, in the communities where it is practised, few women speak out about FGM. It has been a taboo topic, both between the sexes and among women themselves. So talking about it openly is a breakthrough in itself.

Ms. Fatoumata Siré Diakite of the Association for the Advancement and Rights of Malian Women, which works for women's and girls' rights, is proud of achieving dialogue on the issue. "The fact that men are now talking about FGM is a success, because the issue is related to women's sexuality, and it is not easy for men to talk about it in our country. To have a village chief sitting and talking about FGM with women in the same room is a big change," she says.

In Burkina Faso, the need to share feelings about a taboo topic have led the National Committee Against Excision to create an excision hotline, which receives about 30 calls a month.

In a public declaration to abandon FGM among the Bambara people of Karcia, Senegal, an elderly woman spoke in front of the village chief and the religious leaders, Ms. Melching recalls. "She said she never thought to speak about it, but in the class she learned to speak up and she was not afraid anymore. It was quite shocking."

Men also appreciate the knowledge that comes with open discussion. Ms. Melching recalled a man in the education programme whose daughter had died earlier, supposedly from tetanus. After learning how germs are transmitted, he realized his daughter had died from the FGM operation. He then went back to



Dancing during a ceremony in Malicounda Bambara, the first of hundreds of Senegalese villages to end the practice of female genital mutilation.

Like those in Némanning, villagers in hundreds of locations across Africa are now openly discussing and debating FGM, once a taboo topic. Although still on a modest scale, they are increasingly giving up the practice.

Behind the ceremony in Némanning was a Senegalese non-governmental organization (NGO) called Tostan, which means "break-through" in the Wolof language. Already, following similar education programmes by Tostan, 708 Senegalese villages, representing 13 per cent of the total population in Senegal that observes the practice, have made public declarations abandoning FGM.

"The funny thing about the programme is

dures, such as narrowing the vaginal opening through stitching (known as infibulation).

FGM has serious health implications. The women and girls who undergo it often experience bleeding, infection, infertility and difficulties during childbirth that contribute to maternal mortality. The practice diminishes women's sexual pleasure and often causes pain during intercourse. It also causes psychological trauma, directly from the cutting and by seeing sisters, daughters and granddaughters undergo the same ordeal. It symbolically reinforces women's traditionally subordinate roles in society.

Only in a few countries where it is widely practised has FGM been banished by law:

his community and told others to stop the practice, citing the example of his daughter's death.

Culture evolves

Changing an age-old tradition that is embedded in culture is not simple. "FGM is so ingrained in the way of life, it is like eating rice; it has always been there," says Ms. Agnes McAnthony, the coordinator of an FGM eradication campaign in Kenya that brings together 67 organizations. "Therefore it is so hard to end," she told *Africa Recovery*. "If you eat rice all your life and I come and tell you there is something wrong with your rice, will you stop?"

Many women see no contradiction between abandoning FGM while still honouring tradition and culture. "There is no culture and no tradition which is not changing," says Ms. Diakite.

"Tradition is not an end in itself," says Ms. Melching. "Traditions are to help people to be closer together in harmony and peace. Tradition that harms and kills and that does not promote women's and girl's health does not achieve the goal of harmony, peace and well-being for all members of our community."

In the communities where FGM is practised, it is commonly believed that girls who do not undergo the ritual are "impure," with lower social status and chances of getting married. Therefore, despite the pain involved, many girls are willing to go through the operation. Ms. McAnthony, of the Kenya campaign, says that the education programmes can empower the girls and show them that they can still be "full women."

In Mali, says Ms. Diakite, many believe that a baby delivered by an uncut woman will die. "We tell them that in Timbuktu, in Morocco, in France, people do not practise FGM, but are still delivering babies. People then say that they practise FGM in order to be good Muslims. We tell them that in Mecca [where Muslims go for the holy pilgrimage of the hajj], women do not undergo FGM."

Although FGM is not mentioned in the Koran, some Islamic groups promote it as part of Islamic tradition. While lobbying for legislation to outlaw FGM in Mali, Ms. Diakite received death threats. Partly because of the pressure from such groups, the law ultimately did not pass. "The Islamic groups that oppose the elimination of FGM are still active," says Ms. Diakite, "but they are getting weak because there

are imams who say that the Koran does not say that a woman has to be cut."

Different strategies, one goal

In their work on the ground, campaigners against the practice choose their language carefully. Women's organizations have argued that "female genital mutilation" is demeaning because it implies parents are "mutilators." The word "cutting" is more neutral, they say. But some organizations have maintained that a negative connotation is useful in order to deliver a message that the practice is harmful. The term "female circumcision," according to some experts, implies a misleading analogy with male circumcision, thereby obscuring the seriousness of its risks to women. Official UN documents use FGM, the earlier term, while some UN agencies, such as the UN Population Fund, use both FGM and female genital cutting.

According to Ms. Melching, Tostan also avoids using terms like "fight" or "war" when describing its campaign in Senegal. "As soon as you say the words," she says, "there is resistance, defensiveness and anger."

Organizations all over the continent have found enlisting the support of opinion leaders to be instrumental. In Burkina Faso, the minister of social action is Ms. Mariam Lamizana, who has publicly supported ending FGM and is also the president of Women's Voice, an association opposed to violence against women. In

Senegal, Tostan's campaign was supported by Imam Demba Diawara, who toured Bambara villages near Joal to convince the people to end FGM, emphasizing that abandonment would not risk the prestige of their daughters. During the ceremony in Némanning, Senegalese parliamentarians committed themselves to help improve women's health.

Ordinary villagers are becoming empowered. One woman in Némanning noted that learning about human rights, health and how to organize "makes a difference in the life of the women in the community. Now we have more confidence and we participate in decision-making."

There are numerous strategies to eliminate FGM, but all emphasize involving entire communities. In Kenya, organizers promote an alternative rite of passage in which girls aged 12-13 years go through the same ceremony but without the cutting. In Mali, efforts involve lobbying, educating the women practitioners and giving them alternative skills for earning a living. Information is spread by local radio stations, to reduce the public demand for excision.

"Legislation is important," Ms. Maria Gabriela De Vitta, UNICEF advisor on harmful traditional practices, told *Africa Recovery*. "But the community has to want it. To have a different rite of passage is a good strategy, and so are the literacy programmes for women. But the most important thing is participation." ■

International action against FGM

Scores of prominent women and men from countries where female genital mutilation (FGM) is conducted are circulating a global appeal to demand that governments, international bodies and NGOs take more concentrated action to end the practice. "We have decided to denounce and act [against FGM], conscious that silence is the best ally of a terrible custom that has already claimed millions of victims." The promoters and signers include numerous figures from Europe, Asia and Africa, among them the first ladies of Burkina Faso and Nigeria, Senegalese Human Rights Commissioner Mama Bassine Niang, Nigerian Civil Liberties Organization President Ayo Obe and Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former presidential candidate in Liberia and founder of the International Institute for Women's Political Leadership.

In February 2003, a number of the signers and hundreds of activists convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for a conference on "zero tolerance" for FGM. "An intolerable number of women are mutilated, abused, abducted, battered, maimed, bruised ... in the name of tradition," said Ms. Berhane Ras-Work, president of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. "We need to take up the challenge."

In January 2002, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, which characterizes female genital cutting as a serious threat. UNICEF, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and international and local NGOs often point to the resolution in their work. Local advocates also see the resolution and other international conventions on the rights of women and children as important tools for holding governments accountable.

UNICEF created a special programme for gender and harmful traditional practices following the General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May 2002, and regards eliminating FGM as a form of child protection. Ms. Maria Gabriela De Vitta, UNICEF advisor on harmful traditional practices, believes that the target of eliminating all such practices by 2010 may be ambitious — but not too ambitious.

Victory over river blindness

Success of "big dream" is a model for other African health campaigns

By Laolu Akande

Ms. Celestina Hiza, a 60-year-old grandmother in the village of Bombani, Tanzania, was suffering from uncontrollable itching and had developed skin lesions, clear signs of the progression of onchocerciasis, or river blindness. Fortunately for her, she was able to receive a free dose of the drug Mectizan, donated by the US pharmaceutical company Merck, in time to prevent the disease from reaching its mature stage, when irreversible blindness can occur.

Ms. Hiza, in fact, received the 250 millionth dose, a symbolic occasion marked by a ceremony of 2,000 Bombani villagers in September 2002 and attended by Tanzanian Vice-President Ali Mohamed Shein and Merck's chief executive. "This has been a relief to me," she later told reporters. "I am now able

to go back to farming my land and looking after my family."

The Tanzanian grandmother is among a declining number of African villagers still requiring treatment for river blindness, mainly in East and Central Africa.

Across the continent in West Africa, a 30-year campaign against river blindness, known as the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP), formally concluded in December 2002. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the effort has prevented 600,000 new cases of the disease. A total of 18 million villagers were freed from the threat of contracting river blindness. Thousands of farmers are moving to reclaim

fertile river land in West Africa cleared of the danger, an area with the potential to grow enough food for 17 million people.

WHO Director-General Gro Harlem Brundtland, who is concluding her term in office this year, observed that the OCP's accomplishments "inspire all of us in public health to dream big dreams, because we can reach 'impossible' goals and lighten the burden of millions of the world's poorest people."

Ghana's Deputy Health Minister Moses Danyaba called the OCP one of the great success stories in the history of fighting disease. It is an "example for other disease elimination programmes around the world."

A debilitating scourge

In recent decades, onchocerciasis has struck some

18 million people worldwide, and accounts for nearly a tenth of all cases of blindness. The vast majority of river blindness cases have been in sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly 30 countries have been affected.

The river blindness campaign's grassroots focus provides an example for other battles, including against HIV/AIDS, says Mr. Frank Richards of the Carter Center. "You have to involve the national authorities and local communities."

The disease is typically spread by the bite of a black fly, normally found near streams and rivers (giving the disease its common name). Sometimes the bite transmits parasitic worms into the body. As they spread, they cause terrible itching, muscle pains and weakness. Eventually, when the worms

reach their adult stage, they attack the eyes, leading to permanent blindness. The entire process may take up to 30 years from the first bite.

Recently, some German scientists have maintained that a bacteria living inside the worms may actually cause river blindness. If future studies confirm this, then new cases of onchocerciasis may be more easily treatable with common antibiotics, helping reduce future infections even further. Such a breakthrough could help speed the work of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control, which was launched in 1996 to combat the disease in 14 less-severely affected countries in Central and East Africa, and hopes to complete its work by 2010.

Onchocerciasis has been more than a health concern. Especially in West Africa, the black fly breeds along some of the most fertile riverbanks. As a result, at the peak of the disease in the 1970s, about 250,000 square kilometres of productive river valley were abandoned, causing estimated annual economic losses of some \$30 mn. One of the most affected countries in West Africa, Burkina Faso, had 400,000 people infected by the parasite in the mid-1970s.

A coordinated campaign

In 1974, the Onchocerciasis Control Programme was formally launched. The OCP initially included seven countries, WHO, the World Bank, the UN Development Programme and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, but participation eventually grew to more than a dozen countries in West Africa and more than 25 donors, some 40 non-governmental



Girl leads a man struck blind by onchocerciasis in Côte d'Ivoire.

organizations (NGOs) and numerous rural community groups. In 1980 it came under the leadership of Dr. Ebrahim Samba, who 15 years later became the WHO's regional director for Africa.

At the peak of its campaign, the OCP involved some 800 scientists, physicians, field staff and other personnel. It operated on several fronts. Through air-borne spraying of insecticides, it reduced the black fly population in the most heavily infested areas. With donor assistance, it stimulated research into medicines and

effective treatment programmes for those already infected with onchocerciasis.

As Dr. Samba and other observers have emphasized, one of the keys to the OCP's success was the participation of many different actors (see box). This made effective coordination especially important. Despite political conflicts within and among some of the affected countries, the OCP's reputation for honesty and efficiency enabled it to operate across borders.

One critical participant was Merck, a US-based multinational pharmaceutical firm,

which in 1988 offered to donate the medicine Mectizan. If taken in annual doses over a period of 15 years — the life of the adult parasite — Mectizan has been demonstrated to be almost 100 per cent effective. By 2001, Merck had contributed up to 200 mn tablets free of charge (they usually cost \$1.50 each). Hundreds of volunteers initially helped the OCP distribute the medicine, and eventually local communities themselves took over its distribution.

According to Merck Chief Executive Raymond Gilmartin, the company is "committed to continuing the supply of Mectizan free of charge to whoever needs it, wherever they are in the world."

'You can tackle anything'



Dr. Ebrahim Samba

What the success of the campaign against river blindness in West Africa demonstrates is that with the right approach, "you can tackle anything" in Africa, including HIV/AIDS, says Dr. Ebrahim Samba, the Africa regional director of the World Health Organization (WHO). The fruitful outcome of the river blindness campaign, he told *Africa Recovery*, carries a number of lessons that are "applicable to any programme in Africa." These include:

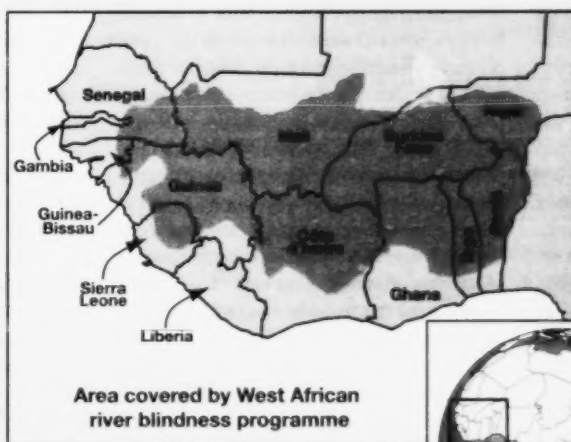
- **A shared vision:** "Among the elements that contributed to success were, number one, a real shared vision, by the beneficiary African countries at the highest level and the non-African partners."
- **Precise definition and realistic plan:** The problem needs to be identified in scientific terms, followed by "a realistic, appropriate plan and strategy built for that problem."

• **Long-term approach:** An effort of two, three, five years is a "waste of time." The campaign against river blindness was planned for 20 years, but went on for almost 30 years.

• **Good technical team:** A team of technical experts and managers who can implement the broad vision, while also managing the human and financial resources of a complex, costly and lengthy programme. "Any abuse of resources, however small, could rupture the whole activity. So there has to be consistent, transparent management of the programme."

• **Enduring support:** There must be ongoing political and financial support for the work of the team carrying out the programme. "The river blindness programme was lucky in that none of the partners bowed down, over the whole period. Some of them came in without being solicited as partners. I say 'partners' and not 'donors and recipients,' because everyone contributed — the African contributed, the non-African contributed."

Similarly, for the current efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, Dr. Samba concluded, "There should be a shared vision. There should be a commitment over a long time — it is much more complicated than river blindness, so it needs 30 years, minimum. There should be dedicated, good staff selected for their competence, not for political or other considerations. And there needs to be a corresponding commitment of funding over time."



Source: UN Africa Recovery from FAO



Local involvement

One of the NGOs involved in monitoring the drug distribution programme and providing training has been Sight Savers International (SSI). The group has been active in combating river blindness for a half century, and has assisted more than 5.5 million people worldwide, according to Ms. Catherine Cross, SSI's programme manager.

One crucial method that SSI and other groups have used in the battle against the disease is to actively involve local people in different aspects of the campaign. They trained primary eye-health care workers, paramedics and specialists in the use of new technologies and techniques. They taught rehabilitation skills to local people, including the blind themselves. Communities and local government institutions were mobilized to help in drug distribution activities.

Mr. Frank Richards, a public health physician with the US-based Carter Center, which also has been active in the river blindness campaign, believes that the OCP's grassroots focus provides an example for other battles, including against HIV/AIDS. "The lesson for the international community," he says, "is that you have to involve the national authorities and local communities."



Obasanjo: New Partnership making progress

Answering criticisms that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been making little visible headway, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has responded that "we have taken our time to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated." Despite this careful and measured pace, the New Partnership already has made "substantial progress ... in many areas," he said on 9 March at a meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, of the NEPAD Implementation Committee. Eight African presidents and prime ministers participated, as did representatives from an additional 13 African countries.

"As we continue to sharpen our focus on implementation strategies of this world-acclaimed development initiative," Mr. Obasanjo said, "... NEPAD has moved beyond the level of mere rhetoric to the concrete and pragmatic stage of implementation."

One step at the Abuja meeting was the formal launching of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). It is intended as a voluntary "self-monitoring" system by which participating African countries subject themselves to ongoing examination by other Africans in such priority areas as peace and security, democracy and political governance, and economic and corporate management. At the Abuja meeting, 10 African countries officially acceded to the APRM — Algeria, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. Botswana and Senegal also have signalled their intention to accede, and other African countries are being urged to do so as well.

African institutions, businesses and individuals were encouraged to contribute substantially to the APRM's funding, "in order to affirm African ownership of the mechanism," said a memorandum of understanding adopted by participants. They also mandated President Obasanjo to oversee the prompt establishment

of a panel of eminent Africans to direct the mechanism's work.

The Nigerian president noted other areas of progress since the last NEPAD meeting of heads of state in November 2002. These included several African-led peace initiatives in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan (see page 3), as well as African mediation in Zimbabwe to try to help that country address its political and economic turmoil.



President Olusegun Obasanjo

Onward to Evian

At the beginning of June, France will host the next meeting of the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries, in the town of Evian. According to French President Jacques Chirac, this will be an opportunity to review what Africa and its external partners have done since the G-8 adopted an "Africa Action Plan" at its last summit in Kananaskis, Canada (see *Africa Recovery*; September 2002). It will also be an occasion at which "this reciprocal commitment should begin to be implemented," Mr. Chirac stated at the France-Africa summit held in Paris in mid-February.

During the Paris summit, President Chirac raised several proposals aimed at helping stimulate African agriculture, including measures to improve market access for African agricultural exports and restart discussions on the question of primary commodity prices. If developed countries are able to achieve a common system of trade preferences for each African country, this would be "indispensable for attracting private investments, a NEPAD priority," he said.

Three pillars of agriculture

With the goal of addressing Africa's recurrent food crises and low agricultural productivity, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has supported the preparation of a draft Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), within the framework of NEPAD. The programme emphasizes the importance of significantly increasing investments in three main "pillars" of agriculture: extension of the area under

sustainable land management; improvement of rural infrastructure; and increases in food supply and reduction of poverty.

Taking into account the priorities highlighted by CAADP, the Italian government announced in March that it would provide a grant of \$3 mn to Uganda. FAO will oversee implementation of the programme, aimed at improving food security and helping reduce poverty levels.

Millions for transport

The African Development Bank has agreed to provide \$200 mn for 17 projects, as part of its efforts to assist NEPAD to develop integrated transportation systems in Africa. Nigerian President Obasanjo also announced in early March that a group of private investors from Malaysia is considering investing some \$1 bn in transportation infrastructure in Nigeria.

Such concrete measures are essential if NEPAD's goals are going to be more than a "mirage," Nigerian Minister of Aviation Kema Chikwe told a transport ministers' forum in Abuja from 9-13 March. Since NEPAD envisages an accelerated process of economic development in Africa, she said, the continent needs "a viable integrated transportation network to facilitate the smooth movement and distribution of goods and services."

UNDP assists Secretariat

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) agreed in early February to provide \$1.9 mn for a programme to help strengthen the work of the NEPAD Secretariat, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. "We know that NEPAD has enormous potential, and UNDP is demonstrating our commitment to seeing the initiative succeed," commented Mr. Abdoulaye Jannet, UNDP's regional director for Africa. Among other things, the UNDP support programme will help the Secretariat enlist experts to promote the New Partnership's objectives, establish an advisory panel of public sector, civil society and private sector representatives to advise on policies and programmes, help integrate the NEPAD and African Union communications strategies, support the work of the African Peer Review Mechanism and strengthen capacity to assess the performance of NEPAD's external partners. ■

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted as the continent's premier development strategy at a July 2001 summit meeting of African heads of state. It also was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in November 2002, as the main framework for international partnership with Africa.

From Davos to Brazil, Africa makes its case

Debt relief and poverty reduction high among the continent's priorities

Whether they were presidents or grassroots activists, the African representatives who took part in two major international conferences early this year argued that globalization should benefit their continent's economic and social advancement, not hinder it.

The two events could not have been more different, however. The 24-27 January World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, was an elite affair. Each year it attracts many of the world's top corporate executives and political leaders of the richest countries. By contrast, the World Social Forum, held around the same time in Porto Alegre, Brazil, since 2001, has often been called the "anti-Davos." It draws large numbers of social activists, trade unionists, community leaders and human rights advocates. Nearly 100,000 turned out for this year's forum, held 23-28 January.

At neither gathering was Africa prominent on the agenda. Debates about an impending war in Iraq and the uncertainties of the world economy tended to dominate. But the small numbers of African participants were nevertheless able to gain some hearing, especially on issues of debt, trade, aid and poverty reduction.

'Give globalization a human face'

Only three African presidents were invited to Davos. They all highlighted their desire for a fresh start through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an African-led initiative that emphasizes Africans' own efforts, but also seeks improved partnership with the international community.

Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa emphasized that a fresh start would only be possible if the yoke of debt is lifted. "We are all in Africa so heavily indebted that no amount of trade can lift us out," he said. "Let us see if we can bring on an accelerated drive for bilateral debt relief, building bridges and national capacities."

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda called for a closer look at the effectiveness of aid and how trade can "help Africa deal with its problems of poverty." Combating AIDS and

achieving peace and security also are essential for the continent's development, he said.

President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique agreed. "Peace must be nourished, as we give globalization a human face." Although Mozambique has had high growth rates since the end of its long civil war in the early 1990s, he noted that "growth is not the same as development. We need to help our people first." He pointed to the need for more equitable international trade, so that African producers can earn more and African exports can gain greater access to world markets.



Aminata Traoré

Mr. Halidou Ouédraogo, head of Burkina Faso's main rights group and president of the Inter-African Human Rights Union, said more African countries should follow the inspiring examples of the successful democratic transitions in South Africa and Kenya. According to Mr. Jackson U. Shamenda, honorary president of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, "We can, and should, be the first continent in the

forefront to safeguard human rights."

New Berlin walls

Some of the developing world's concerns were raised in a keynote address by Mr. Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva, a former trade union leader who won a sweeping victory in Brazil's October 2002 presidential election and took office just a few weeks before Davos. "More than 10 years ago the Berlin Wall fell," he said. "But other 'walls' remain. They separate those who eat from those who go hungry, those with jobs from those without, those who live in dignity from those who live in the streets or in miserable shanties, those who have access to education and the cultural riches of civilization from those who are mired in illiteracy and the most complete alienation."

He called on industrialized countries to stop protecting their markets from Southern exports and to help set up an international fund to combat global misery and hunger. Noting that Brazil has the second largest black population in the world, after Nigeria, he said that his country has "a special perspective on the

African continent, with which we have deep ethnic and cultural ties."

President da Silva also highlighted Africa's plight at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. "African babies have the same right to eat as a blond, blue-eyed baby born in Scandinavia," he told the huge crowd.

'Our priority is the debt'

In proportion to participants from Latin America, not many African social activists were able to make it to Porto Alegre, however. Among those who did, Africa's large debt burden ranked high among the priorities. So did reparations from countries that had taken part in the slave trade and the colonial conquest of Africa, a demand that featured prominently at the 2001 "anti-racism" summit in Durban, South Africa.

"Our priority is the debt," stated Ms. Aminata Traoré, Mali's former culture minister. The debt "wipes out all our efforts for education, health and development, and for that reason it needs to be cancelled. Then we need reparations for five centuries of colonialism and slavery. On this basis a new cooperation with the North could help all of us on a road of real development."

Mr. Taoufik Ben Abdallah, of the Senegal-based Environment and Development Action-Third World, also stressed the importance of reparations for slavery and colonialism, which he termed the North's "historic debt" to Africa.

A few weeks earlier, more than 200 other African civil society representatives participated in an African Social Forum, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 5-9 January. They emphasized the need for African civil society groups to organize better, so that they can play a more central role in future World Social Forums, including the next one in New Delhi, India.

In a consensus statement, the participants, who came from 40 African countries, also criticized "Africa's illegitimate external debt," rejected the privatization of basic social services, challenged the inequities of the world trading system, denounced "the continuing poor African leadership that thrives on tribal and ethnic divisions" and stressed the importance of African unity and social integration. They affirmed that "globalization from below, thought out, owned and implemented by people's organizations, is both necessary and possible." ■

New strategies to combat hunger, disease and poverty

from page 1

"Food insecurity in Africa has structural causes," Mr. Annan emphasizes. "Most African farmers cultivate small plots of land that do not produce enough to meet the needs of their families. The problem is compounded by the farmers' lack of bargaining power and lack of access to land, finance and technology." Because small-scale farmers and other rural Africans have so few food stocks and little income, a period of drought can quickly trigger famine conditions. This is especially true for rural women, who are among the poorest of the poor and who account for the bulk of food production in Africa.

Some African countries, such as Senegal, are beginning to address the need to "modernize" agriculture (see page 14). This means giving poor farmers security, essential infrastructure such as rural roads and greater access to credit,

page 17). In rural Africa, markets often do not function well, tend to marginalize the very poor and can be disrupted by the sudden withdrawal of government support resulting from economic liberalization policies.

External constraints

African governments, often bound by the policy conditions of external financing agencies, have limited scope for devising agricultural policies that benefit poorer food farmers. They also have few financial resources of their own for significant agricultural investment. So increasing such investment, Mr. Annan notes, will require "reversing the alarming decline in development assistance for African agriculture," which fell from an annual average of \$4 bn to \$2.6 bn during the 1990s.

In addition, many African producers of export crops are seriously hampered by unfavourable — and inequitable — international

"dismantling the agricultural subsidies from rich countries," which currently total more than \$300 bn per year. "Only then will Africa be able to achieve truly sustainable agricultural production."

A comprehensive approach

Since the solutions to Africa's food insecurity and rural poverty do not lie within agriculture alone, Mr. Annan points out, African countries and the international community must take action on a number of different fronts. These include:

- Doing more to integrate into short-term emergency programmes actions that also address the structural causes of famine. This includes correcting the drastic shortfalls in non-food items in emergency situations, such as seeds and tools, support for orphans, education and HIV services.
- Strengthening a multi-sectoral approach to combating HIV/AIDS, including by improving efforts to prevent infection and treating those already infected.
- Ensuring that the 40 million African children who are not receiving an education are able to get into school — and ensuring that those who are in school, especially girls, are not pulled out when drought or HIV strikes a household.
- Empowering Africa's small farmers, with a special focus on women, who are both the key food providers and crucial to fighting AIDS.
- Working with rural communities to develop new labour-saving agricultural and natural resource management technologies, appropriate to a depleted workforce.
- Reversing the dramatic decline in publicly funded agricultural research and strengthening Africa's scientific institutions, to achieve progress in such areas as soil nutrition, water management and new, higher-yielding crops adapted to African conditions.
- Focusing on critical physical infrastructure, including transport, support services and irrigation.
- Building markets that work and respond to the needs of Africa's poor.



Agricultural research laboratory in Mauritania: More financing is needed to develop higher-yielding crops and other farming improvements.

water and appropriate technologies. With improved seeds, fertilizer, irrigation and use of draught animals, the average African farmer can multiply her output many times over.

But the challenges are daunting. HIV/AIDS is seriously debilitating the rural labour force in countries with the highest infection rates, further undermining agricultural production and productivity (see page 11). Livestock disease is a big obstacle to better integrating the use of draught animals into farming practices (see

markets and trading arrangements, issues that have seen very little progress in the current World Trade Organization negotiations (see page 23). Especially debilitating for African agriculture have been the large subsidies that rich countries provide their own farmers, which have the effect of pushing down world market prices for cotton, sugar and other African farm exports (see page 18). Therefore, the UN Secretary-General says, increasing resources for agriculture in Africa will require

turn to page 22

Famine and AIDS: a lethal mixture

Southern Africa reels from a twin onslaught

By John Nyamu

As Southern Africa's HIV/AIDS infection rates combine with widespread famine conditions, the region faces not only sickness and starvation, but also a severe long-term threat to its economies and societies. This twin onslaught of disease and hunger has dire consequences for families, communities and production systems. Agriculture, Africa's economic mainstay, is being hit especially hard.

The focus of Africa's latest food emergency is not only the arid, drought-prone Horn of Africa or Sahel regions, but also Southern Africa. Most of its countries are largely fertile, well watered and traditionally self-sufficient in food. One reason for Southern Africa's current crisis is that the region also has the world's highest HIV infection levels. The UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimated that infection rates in 2002 ranged from 15 per cent of adults in Malawi up to more than 30 per cent in Swaziland and Lesotho and a staggering 39 per cent in Botswana. Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that, as of March, the number of people requiring food assistance in Zimbabwe stood at 7.2 million, or 52 per cent of the population. Nearly 8 million more also need food aid in Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland.

A new kind of famine

Returning from a tour of the region in January, Mr. Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, noted that the swift delivery of food aid has helped ease the immediate humanitarian crisis. But at the same time, he added, a horrifying new disaster looms as HIV/AIDS threatens the "very existence of whole countries."

Mr. Lewis's trip to Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe was part of a joint mission with WFP Executive Director James Morris, who is also the Secretary-General's special envoy for humanitarian needs in Southern Africa. The mission's findings, Mr. Lewis said, conclusively demonstrate that a new kind of crisis has developed in the region, with food shortages and agricultural decline strongly influenced by HIV/AIDS. In all the countries visited, the epidemic has taken a

heavy toll on the most productive people — those between the ages of 15 and 45 years. It also has worsened the effects of agricultural mismanagement and poor governance.

Describing the pandemic as "the most fundamental underlying cause of the Southern African crisis," the two officials said it is changing the nature of famine in Africa by cutting agricultural productivity, sapping the population and undermining people's ability to recover from natural and man-made shocks.

The mechanics are chillingly simple. As farmers fall ill, physical weakness reduces their effectiveness and the area they cultivate shrinks, leading to declining crop yields. Food security is simultaneously jeopardized by the diversion of labour, time and

Hospice in Zambia, with feeding programme for outpatients with HIV/AIDS.



money to deal with the illness. Agricultural households revert to subsistence rather than cash crop farming, bringing a fall in household incomes and the capacity to buy food. Family expenditures on health care rise, eventually consuming savings and other resources.

"The effect of AIDS on food production is both immediate and long-term," UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot has pointed out.

Some effects are very direct. As of 2001, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 7 million of Africa's agricultural workers already had died of AIDS, and that 20 million more may succumb by 2020. Such deaths will seriously deplete Southern Africa's agricultural labour force — and thereby reduce the region's ability to grow food or other crops (see graph, page 13).

A study in a communal area in Zimbabwe has demonstrated that an adult death from the disease can immediately reduce a household's

ability to produce different foods. The declines average 61 per cent for maize, 49 per cent for vegetables, 47 per cent for cotton and 37 per cent for groundnuts. In Malawi, death rates among employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation have doubled, almost all because of HIV/AIDS. In Namibia, studies indicate that agricultural extension workers spend one-tenth of their work time attending the funerals of people who died of AIDS.

In the long term, orphaned children often lack the skills to farm or look after livestock under their care, and households may be forced to sell their livestock to pay for funeral expenses. On a wider scale, extended family networks, which usually cope with the normal traumas of life in African countries, begin to fray under the weight of orphaned young relatives, as breadwinners can no longer bear the extra costs. It is not unusual for a grandmother to care for 20 orphans.

Women hit hard

One aspect of the crisis in Southern Africa has been its disproportionate impact on women. The mission report noted that the prevalence of HIV infection is highest among women and girls, who generally take on nearly all the responsibilities of caring for the sick and orphaned, in addition to their regular obligations to provide food for their households. Yet, the report adds, "very little is being done to reduce women's risks, to protect them from sexual aggression and violence, to ease their burdens or to support their coping and caring efforts."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan raised the same concern at the Africa-France Summit in February, highlighting the clear gender dimension to AIDS-related food insecurity. Women care for the young, old, sick and dying, he said, and they nurture social networks that help societies share burdens. "In the past, it was their expert knowledge of alternative foods that kept their families going during times of drought. Yet with AIDS rising dramatically and disproportionately among women, that lifeline is being threatened." In an address last December, he cited 2002 estimates to emphasize the dramatic spread of HIV/AIDS among women. For the first time, he noted, women make up some 50 per cent of HIV-positive people worldwide, with the share rising to 58 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.

Meanwhile, a study on HIV/AIDS and African agriculture by the FAO has shown that with the deaths of increasing numbers of male farmers, rural women, who are already overburdened, are becoming responsible for even more tasks. "These structural changes in small-holder agriculture," concluded the study, "are likely to contribute to increased malnutrition and an overall decline in the nutritional status of a growing number of resource-poor farmers, particularly women and children, with far-reaching consequences for the health and productivity of the agricultural labour force."

'Grinding down'

Mr. Lewis associated AIDS with "the grinding down of society," stressing that the decay of Africa's agricultural sector could be a harbinger of worse to come. Among countries on his

tour, Malawi offers a graphic illustration. While several rivers crisscross the lush, green countryside and Africa's third-largest lake forms its eastern border, Malawi is losing people to work its fertile land. It has an annual rate of 70,000 deaths from AIDS-related illnesses (including tuberculosis, malaria and cholera).



The lack of resources to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic is "mass murder by complacency," UN special envoy Stephen Lewis said after his tour of Southern Africa. Those who watch it unfold "with a kind of pathological equanimity" must be held to account.

and life expectancy has fallen from 46 years to 36 years, according to the UN Development Programme. Partly as a result, Malawi has sought emergency food assistance, including donations of maize — the key staple of East and Southern Africa.

In the mountainous kingdom of Lesotho, HIV/AIDS has exacerbated the impact of the crop failures of the last two years, caused by unusual weather patterns. Rains have come too early or too late. Hailstorms, tornadoes and even summertime frost have damaged newly sprouting maize. Lesotho has the world's fourth-highest HIV infection rate, with nearly one-third of working-age adults infected with the virus. "We're told repeatedly by donors that we don't have capacity. I know we have no capacity; give us some help and we'll build the capacity," Prime Minister Pakalitha B. Mosisili told Mr. Lewis when the mission visited the country.

In Zimbabwe, some 2.2 million people are infected with the virus, of whom 600,000 have developed full-blown AIDS. According to the Ministry of Health, 70 per cent of hospital admissions are HIV-related. Expressing concern over the government's lack of capacity or willingness to address the deepening crisis, the mission report predicted that Zimbabweans would become more vulnerable throughout 2003 because "it is clear that 2002/2003 agricultural production will fall far short of national needs." The deficit is expected to also affect

neighbouring countries, many of which have previously depended on food imports from Zimbabwe, particularly in times of drought.

The drought has been particularly severe in Zambia, where the HIV/AIDS pandemic has not only devastated agricultural production and depleted the work force, but also affected every other aspect of life and society. Some 40,000 to 90,000 people had died of AIDS by the end of 2000, most of them men between the ages of 20 and 45, according to one study. The epidemic's particularly high toll on the country's teachers has been aggravated by the high social stigma surrounding the disease. According to Mr. Lewis, former President Frederick Chiluba denied the reality of AIDS and threw obstacles in the way of those keen to confront it. Since last year's election of President Levy Mwanawasa, Mr. Lewis noted, there has been a dramatic improvement in political leadership on the subject of AIDS.

'Mass murder by complacency'

Although heartened by African leaders' new willingness to discuss the epidemic, Mr. Lewis pointed out that money remains a critical missing element. He called the lack of resources to fight the epidemic "mass murder by complacency," and said that those who watched it unfold "with a kind of pathological equanimity" must be held to account.

Echoing the special envoy's concern about international complacency, Mr. Richard Feachem, executive director of the UN's Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, wrote in a *Washington Post* commentary: "The world's failure to fully fund our efforts — or any comparable effort — is yet another indication that people lack the sense of urgency this crisis demands." The Global Fund has agreed to support programmes worth \$1.5 bn over the next two years in more than 80 countries. But to carry out further essential activities, it needs an additional \$2 bn in 2003 and \$4.6 bn next year.

US President George W. Bush's recent pledge to add \$10 bn in anti-AIDS funding for Africa to the \$5 bn previously promised may go some way towards addressing these concerns, UN officials note. However, disputes over unrelated issues within the US Congress may yet jeopardize approval.

In South Africa, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel announced in his February budget proposals an intention to commit approximately R2 bn (US\$233 mn) to provide antiretroviral treatment for people living with HIV. The government also announced that it would sign an agreement with the Global Fund. While drought has not so seriously affected South Africa or Botswana, the region's two most prosperous nations, their infection rates are among the highest in the world.

More attention to nutrition

Proper nutrition for people living with HIV is another basic issue that is rarely addressed. The FAO and World Health Organization (WHO) have jointly published a manual, *Living Well with HIV/AIDS*, which offers dietary suggestions for people with HIV/AIDS.*

"The relationship between HIV/AIDS and malnutrition is a particularly extreme example of the vicious cycle of immune dysfunction, infectious disease and malnutrition," said Dr. David Nabarro, WHO executive director for sustainable development and healthy environments, in late February. According to Mr. Kraisid Tontisirin, director of FAO's food and nutrition division, "The nutritional aspect of HIV/AIDS has been ignored for a long time. The attention was always focused on drugs."

Dr. Graeme Clugston, director of WHO's

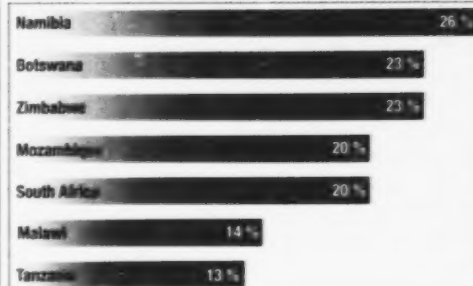
department for nutrition in health and development, also affirms the need to pay special attention to the relationship between nutrition and HIV/AIDS: "The effect of HIV on nutrition begins early in the course of the disease, even before an individual may be aware that he or she is infected with the virus."

Pointing out the effects of AIDS on nutritional well-being — including reduced nutrient absorption, disruption of appetite and metabolism and wasting of muscles, organs and other tissue — the manual emphasizes that eating considerably more food helps to fight the illness and make up for weight loss. A balanced diet requires more protein to rebuild muscle tissue, more energy-rich foods for weight gain, immune system-boosting vitamins and minerals and water to combat dehydration, it adds. Herbs and spices can stimulate a sluggish appetite or digestion and may have other beneficial effects. However, with extreme poverty widespread in Southern Africa, many people cannot afford to buy the right kinds of foods.

New approaches needed

Amid the harsh realities of HIV/AIDS, particularly in Southern Africa, no single action will make much headway. A combination of actions

AIDS Impact on agricultural labour projected losses 1985-2020



Source: UN Africa Recovery, from data in FAO, "HIV/AIDS: A Threat to Food Security and Rural Development," Rome: 2000.

is needed, experts say: against HIV/AIDS, hunger and rural poverty, and for improved agricultural systems and social services.

The joint mission to Southern Africa by Mr. Lewis and Mr. Morris suggested combining food aid with far-reaching agricultural development strategies and labour-saving technologies that increase resilience to erratic rainfall. It recommended help to generate income and restimulate local food production without adding extra burdens to households affected by HIV/AIDS.

"Relevant actions in education, health, nutrition, water, hygiene and sanitation-related interventions will also be necessary," the mission report said. "The pandemic's steady weakening of national governments and its erosion of their social services call for measures that go beyond building capacity; it is also time to speak of capacity replacement and replenishment." The mission called for long-term measures to strengthen coping skills and ease the burdens on poor and vulnerable households and social groups in order to prevent repeated food shortages.

Mr. Annan told the General Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in February that emergency responses to immediate food crises must at the same time be accompanied by long-term development and health initiatives. "We must," he said, "combine food assistance and new approaches to farming with treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS."

An elderly farmer in Burkina Faso: Africa is losing many of its younger and most productive people to HIV/AIDS.



United Nations

* Available online at: <www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4168E/Y4168E00.htm>.

Senegal: to fight hunger, modernize farming

An uncertain path amidst conflicting interests and pressures

By Ernest Harsch

For the first time ever in Senegal's history, tens of thousands of farmers from across the country marched on the capital on 26 January to voice their grievances and anger. They converged on the largest stadium in Dakar to demand policies to improve their harvests, boost their incomes, reduce rural poverty and lift them from the status of "second-class citizens." By their action, they shattered the common urban perception of Senegalese villagers as silent and passive. "Farmers, more than ever before, are mobilizing to better their conditions of life," declared Mr. Mamadou Sall, president of the largest national farmers' group, the Conseil national de concertation et de coopération des ruraux (CNCR).



Measuring grain in a village in northern Senegal.

The organization presented government officials with a "Farmers' Manifesto." It noted that agricultural productivity remains very low and that most rural people live below the national poverty line. "Agriculture has been in crisis since the end of the 1970s, and this has led poverty and food insecurity to become generalized throughout the rural areas," the manifesto said. Affirming the CNCR's own

determination to change such conditions, it also appealed for solidarity from all social groups in Senegal and asked the government to open talks with farmers to develop long-term solutions.

Addressing the rally, Minister of Agriculture Habib Sy promised to take the farmers' concerns directly to President Abdoulaye Wade. He expressed the government's openness to dialogue with farmers, and explained the measures it already has initiated. Many farmers welcomed Mr. Sy's pledges, but also wondered about the extent of the government's commitment.

Only a few months earlier had President Wade vowed to begin systematic, long-term efforts to "modernize" agriculture, more than two years after his government was elected into office. It took successive poor harvests and reports of widespread rural hunger to finally bring the plight of villagers to the centre of the policy debate.

That debate is just beginning, and easy solutions are not apparent. The challenge of transforming Senegal's low-yielding agriculture into a vibrant productive sector that can raise rural living standards and improve food security faces complex constraints. These include the grinding poverty of the farmers themselves, insufficient government resources for rural investment, limited access to water, environmental degradation, pressures from external financial institutions for rapid liberalization and unfavourable world market conditions for Senegalese farm exports.

A difficult legacy

The problems facing Senegalese farmers are not recent, and affect both food growers and producers of cash crops, above all groundnuts. Production methods on the country's 440,000 farms have long been very simple, as most farmers cultivate small plots with just hand tools and almost no fertilizer or other inputs besides rain.

Although agriculture provides livelihoods for around 60 per cent of the population and accounts for 18 per cent of gross domestic product, it receives only 10 per cent of all public investments. For many decades — including the French colonial era — the groundnut sector absorbed the lion's share of public financing for agriculture. Since independence in 1960, almost all the government's training, subsidies and agricultural extension services have been oriented to groundnut production.

Such support has not led to much improvement in rural living standards, even in Senegal's main groundnut zones. Most villages lack running water or electricity. In many areas the soil has eroded or become acidic. A succession of droughts hit hard in the late 1970s and early 1980s, bringing more environmental degradation and rural impoverishment.

By the mid-1980s the government began to adopt new economic policies at the urging of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. These eliminated some agricultural extension services and gradually ended fertilizer subsidies. Too poor to buy fertilizer outright, many farmers took out loans at the start of the planting season, but then were left deep in debt when the rains failed or crop prices dropped unexpectedly.

Over the past five years, fertilizer use for groundnut cultivation has declined further, from 45,500 tonnes in the 1997/98 season to just 25,000 tonnes in 2001/02. Yields have plummeted accordingly, and with them farmer incomes. "For us, the sale of groundnuts is the only source of monetary income," says Mr. Ali Mballo, a farmer.

According to the UN Development Programme's 2001 national "Human Development Report" for Senegal, about 85 per cent of the rural population lives below the poverty line. This is considerably higher than the rate of 60 per cent for the country as a whole.

Drought depletes grain stocks

Discontent over such conditions led many rural voters during the March 2000 presidential election to shift their support from the old ruling party to the opposition coalition of Abdoulaye Wade, which promised sweeping *Sopi* ("change" in the Wolof language). In the

new government's brief period in office, it has in fact introduced numerous reforms, including efforts to combat corruption, improve the delivery of essential social services and strengthen Senegal's democratic system. President Wade has emerged as one of the main developers and promoters of the continent's development strategy, the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Many of these changes have not been felt in Senegal's countryside, however. Making matters worse, the first years of this decade have been marked by inadequate rainfall. This contributed to a steady decline in total national cereal production, from more than 1.2 mn tonnes of millet, sorghum, rice and maize in the 1999/2000 agricultural season to just 835,000 tonnes in 2002/03, according to Ministry of Agriculture projections released in December (see graph).

For two years, many farming households were able to manage by using their domestic grain stocks or selling off some livestock or other goods to buy more food. But by 2002 the situation had worsened dramatically. Grain sheds in many villages were virtually empty. Unexpectedly heavy rains in northern Senegal in January caused serious flooding, which destroyed crops and killed several dozen people and more than 100,000 head of livestock. The early rains for the 2002/03 growing season, expected in June, did not actually begin to arrive until August in most of the main groundnut and grain regions. With many farmers already producing at very low levels, these calamities pushed major parts of the Senegalese countryside toward near-famine conditions.

'Sweeping liberalization'

Parallel to these difficulties, groundnut farmers suddenly found themselves caught in a breakdown of established marketing arrangements, precipitated by a policy shift. The government of President Wade had inherited economic agreements signed by its predecessor. These included a commitment in 1995 to privatize the state-owned groundnut enterprise, the Société nationale de commercialisation des oléagineux du Sénégal (Sonacos), although at the time no buyers could be found and it remained in state hands.

Following the political change in Senegal, the IMF stepped up pressure to move ahead with the liberalization process. But the new government initially emphasized state action to

boost farmers' incomes and stimulate rural economic activity, in part by using Sonacos to aggressively promote groundnut cultivation. During the 2000/01 season, Sonacos borrowed massively in order to buy from farmers a record level of 600,000 tonnes of groundnuts at a relatively favourable price. (Production that year reached a record total of more than 1 mn tonnes, with the remainder of the crop bought by informal groundnut merchants, called *bana-bana*.)

This injected significant financing into the countryside. But for Sonacos it proved unsustainable. Because the price paid to groundnut farmers was well above world market levels and a significant minority of farmers had trouble repaying the loans they received from the enterprise to buy fertilizer and other inputs, Sonacos was saddled with a sizeable debt.

A number of Senegal's donors reacted sharply. In April 2001, a European Union official warned that failure by Sonacos to liberalize the distribution of groundnut seeds could jeopardize EU aid to the country. Then in July, IMF officials visiting Senegal demanded that the government stop subsidizing groundnut marketing and bring prices closer to world market levels. The following month, Sonacos

The challenge of transforming Senegal's low-yielding agriculture into a vibrant productive sector that can raise rural living standards and improve food security faces complex constraints.

Société nationale de graines (Sonagraines), a wholly owned subsidiary of Sonacos which had played a major role in the collection and transport of groundnuts from the farmers' fields to Sonacos's processing plants (which transform the nuts into cooking oil). The authorities expected that licenced private marketing agents, known as *opérateurs privés stockeurs* (OPS), would step into the void.

The result was a disaster for groundnut farmers. Even with significant financial advances from Sonacos, some of the nearly 500 licenced OPS could not arrange transport to collect the groundnuts from farmers' fields. Many did collect the nuts, but paid the farmers only in vouchers, not cash. Months later, many farmers still had not been paid. This meant that they could not buy seeds or fertilizer for the next planting season, clear their debts — or pay for food or other household essentials.

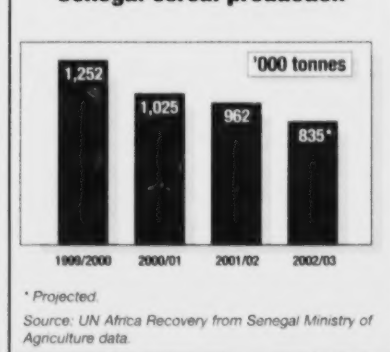
As farmers in some parts of the country began to set up roadblocks across national highways in protest, the CNCR and other farmers' groups became increasingly militant. Many blamed their plight on the government's policy shift. "One of the big problems facing agriculture is the sweeping liberalization of our national economy," said Mr. Samba Guèye, secretary-general of the CNCR.

Some also noted the problem of low world market prices for groundnuts, cotton and other Senegalese agricultural exports. Senegal holds second place in the world groundnut market, behind the US. But, notes Mr. Serigne Amadou Camara, in charge of managing the government's state enterprises, "Our main competitor, the United States, subsidizes its price. We don't have the means to fight that."

Turning 'peasants' into 'farmers'

In August 2002, the government finally began to respond. Taken together, its initiatives point towards a continued pursuit of market liberalization and promotion of the private sector, but with more emphasis than before on state investment in rural infrastructure and public programmes to safeguard farmers from the vagaries of the market and the weather. In various statements, President Wade emphasized the need to "modernize" Senegal's underdeveloped, low-input agriculture. The aim, he

Senegal cereal production



agreed to cut the price it paid to farmers from CFA145 to CFA120 per kilogramme and to sharply reduce its direct purchases, moves that shocked many groundnut farmers.

In November of the same year, a cabinet meeting further agreed that the government would privatize Sonacos during 2003. As a step in that direction, it also simply dissolved the



A Senegalese plant nursery: Careful use of limited water resources and protection of fragile topsoil will be central to agricultural sustainability.

said, is to transform Senegal's subsistence "peasants" into market-oriented "farmers" capable of producing more for both domestic and external markets.

President Wade and other officials acknowledged that Sonagraines was liquidated too hastily, in response to external pressures. The decision, however, could not now be reversed, they said, and the challenge is to ensure that the new marketing system functions better. The president ordered the judicial authorities to take legal action against "thieves and swindlers" who took farmers' crops but failed to pay them, as Sonacos tightened up its licensing criteria.

Among the other steps that President Wade announced, some were designed to tackle immediate food shortages, while others have longer-term development implications. These included:

- Significant short-term relief assistance, financed directly by the government, to help victims of flooding and drought, with distribution supervised by a high-level oversight committee composed of farmers' leaders, media figures and political party representatives.
- The establishment of local grain stocks, to speed emergency responses to food shortages in Senegal's 11 regions.
- Greater emphasis on promoting agricultural diversification, to end the "tyranny of monocropping," as President Wade termed it. At the national level, there already have been important steps to stimulate more production of cotton, sesame, soya, sunflowers, rice and other food and export crops, so as to reduce the economy's dependence on

groundnuts. In the fields, production of more than one type of crop can give farmers greater flexibility and better protect them from market and weather fluctuations.

- The digging of 50 water retention basins to better preserve and utilize rain, along with more irrigation schemes. Senegal has the potential to irrigate 240,000 hectares in the Senegal River Basin, thanks to the Dama and Manantali dam projects. So far, however, only 70,000 hectares are irrigated (up from 36,000 three years ago). Smaller-scale projects are also under way elsewhere in the country, especially involving rice.
- The initiation of a cloud-seeding project designed to induce additional rainfall. This would utilize Moroccan expertise, already demonstrated by successful programmes in Morocco and Burkina Faso.
- Acceleration of plans to connect all of Senegal's villages to the national electricity grid.
- The construction of new agricultural training schools and colleges around the country.

At the end of August, President Wade toured most of Senegal's regions, to explain his government's initiatives and hear directly from farmers and livestock herders about their problems. Many complained about the new groundnut marketing arrangement, the high cost of inputs, the poor quality of health services and the absence of an effective food security system. At one rally in Saloum, Mr. Wade pledged that "we will never abandon the countryside" and insisted that for his government, agriculture and stockraising will be "two priority areas of development."

Elements for success

Many farmers reacted to the government's pledges with hope, but also a measure of caution. They have heard high-level promises before. Many are waiting to see what is included in the new agricultural law that the government is drafting for discussion and approval by the legislature. Nevertheless, the crisis in Senegal's villages and the authorities' initial responses have already stimulated greater public debate about how best to transform the countryside.

In the policy realm, President Wade has been arguing for a pragmatic mix of market mechanisms and state support and regulation, an approach that enjoys wide backing in Senegal, even if there are differences on the precise nature of that combination. Mr. Wade frequently talks about the benefits of markets and private initiative, but he also insists that in an inequitable world market in which rich Northern countries subsidize their farmers to the detriment of producers in the South, countries like Senegal should also be permitted to subsidize agriculture.

At a minimum, many Senegalese argue, governments should be able to invest in rural electrification, roads and other infrastructure essential to improving agricultural productivity and rural living conditions. "Everywhere in the world," says Mr. Mamadou Cissoko, a CNCR leader, "it is public investments that create favourable conditions for agricultural production and soil regeneration." In particular, the CNCR maintains, such investments should be targeted towards small-scale family farmers, the vast majority of the rural population.

There also is broad agreement on the need for more active involvement by farmers, livestock herders, village artisans, women and rural people. The CNCR, which has been especially energetic in voicing rural concerns, is only one of the better-known national organizations. There are literally hundreds of agricultural cooperatives, village associations and producers' groups around the country. The national cotton farmers' association has acquired a 20 per cent ownership stake in the government's cotton marketing enterprise, and the CNCR is hoping to acquire a share of Sonacos. "In the new vision of agriculture," President Wade has said, "I intend to involve everyone."

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Eradicating tsetse flies from Africa

Small insect is a big problem for agriculture and health

By **Naututu Okhoya**

It has been more than six years since the last tsetse fly was seen in Zanzibar. Routine blood samples taken from cattle have tested negative for the trypanosome parasites that are spread by the flies. As a result, milk production has tripled, local beef production has doubled and the use of animal manure for crop farming has increased five-fold, according to the Ministry of Agriculture of the island, which is part of Tanzania.

But elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, trypanosomiasis — the disease spread by the parasite and commonly known as sleeping sickness or *nagana* — is still widespread. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 60 million people are at risk from sleeping sickness, with about 500,000 already infected.

This marks a resurgence. Thanks to systematic cattle health programmes and screening, Africa had virtually no new cases in the

HIV/AIDS, the WHO reports. Although early diagnosis of trypanosomiasis offers high chances of recovery, the lack of screening and care means that 80 per cent of infected people eventually die, while 3 mn live-stock succumb annually.

'Green deserts'

Mr. John Kabayo, who heads the Addis Ababa coordination office of the Pan-African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign (PATTEC), says that the most challenging problem facing Africa remains rural poverty, which is intrinsically linked to food insecurity. "If you look at this disease," he told *Africa Recovery*, "you see that nothing has been more significant in the way it shaped the continent of Africa. It is because of tsetse that there are few horses in Africa, that we get a separation of crop and animal production, that there is no mixed farming."

Without draught animals, many African farmers have no means of transport or power to pull heavy ploughs. They continue to till the land with hand hoes.

Because of the tsetse fly, not many African farmers are now able to use animals for ploughing.



decades from the 1940s through the 1960s. However, because of budget cuts by governments and donor agencies, only 3-4 million of those at risk now are screened. Conflict zones and remote rural areas — where there is diminished control and greater movement of human and animal carriers — are registering the largest numbers of cases. In the zone between southern Sudan and Angola, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, sleeping sickness is the leading cause of death, ahead of

And since crop and livestock production are physically separated, Mr. Kabayo adds, soil fertility suffers from a lack of manure for fertilizing crops. No region of the world suffers the same animal health problem as the tsetse imposes on Africa. In Asia, an estimated 50 per cent of crop production benefits from the power of draught animals. In Africa, the rate is only 5-10 per cent. As a result, estimates the Food and Agriculture Organization, Africa may lose \$4.5 bn in potential crop production each year.

Some experts say that trypanosomiasis helps create African "green deserts" — 10 mn square kilometres of otherwise lush and fertile land that is not in production because of the tsetse fly carrier. This includes land in 32 of the world's poorest countries.

"It is no accident that the concentration of much of the world's most acute poverty is in regions of sub-Saharan Africa infested with tsetse," notes Mr. Quian Jihui, deputy director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is centrally

"It is no accident that the concentration of much of the world's most acute poverty is in regions of sub-Saharan Africa infested with tsetse."

— **Quian Jihui**
deputy director-general,
Int'l Atomic Energy Agency

involved in many of Africa's efforts to eradicate tsetse flies through radiation-induced sterilization. "Allowing more Africans farmers to own livestock would have a profound impact on hunger and poverty in the continent," he says. "But that cannot be achieved without the elimination of the tsetse fly."

In launching the PATTEC campaign in October 2001, African leaders concurred. "Africa's most viable contribution to its expanding population and to the rest of the world in the new millennium is increased agriculture production," they said in a declaration. "The first step towards the development and realization of this dream is the removal of the trypanosomiasis constraint."

Mr. Kabayo cited four compelling motivations for the PATTEC initiative:

- considerable data and irrefutable evidence place trypanosomiasis at the root of Africa's poverty
- the success in Zanzibar demonstrated the technical feasibility of fighting the disease through the sterile insect technology (SIT) approach
- the limited possibilities of coping with the disease through established methods, as manufacturers are considering discontinuing production of the drugs now in use
- the trans-boundary nature of the problem requires concerted efforts by all affected countries, from Senegal to South Africa, to ensure cooperation, partnership and sharing of resources.

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Mounting opposition to Northern farm subsidies

African cotton farmers battling to survive

By **Gumisi Mutume**

In the small, remote village of Logokourani in western Burkina Faso, cotton is everything. It is the mainstay of that rural community, providing the major, and in some cases the only, source of income for many inhabitants. Cotton pays for health and education. It helps build houses and schools. Not too long ago, when exports of cotton increased in value, production expanded in that part of the country, raising village incomes.

But the collapse of the cotton price on the world market — it has fallen by 54 per cent since the mid-1990s — threatens the very existence of communities such as Logokourani. "Cotton prices are too low to keep our children in school, or to buy food and pay for health," notes Mr. Brahim Ouattara, a small-scale cotton farmer in Logokourani. "Some farmers are already leaving. Another season like this will destroy our community."

While the major factors behind the declining price are varied and complex, the most significant is the increase in government subsidies paid to cotton farmers in the US, some analysts say. Similarly, agricultural subsidies in the European Union (EU) are cited as major factors in the decline of the world price of sugar. Rich nations of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development spent about \$360 bn on agricultural supports during 2001, for a range of commodities. The practice of paying such subsidies to farmers in industrial nations is facing increased opposition from developing countries, which charge that subsidies foster unfair trade and flood world markets with cheap goods, thereby eroding commodity prices.

The non-governmental organization Oxfam argues that production and export subsidies in the US have devastated not only small communities in Africa, but entire regions. In a study on the impact of US cotton subsidies on Africa, *Cultivating Poverty*, released in September, the NGO outlines the devastation through a series of interviews with small-scale farmers on the continent, including Mr. Ouattara.

During the 2001/02 season, the US spent about \$3.9 bn on subsidies and other supports to its 25,000 cotton farmers, the NGO notes — double the 1992 figure. These subsidies have encouraged overproduction in the US, resulting

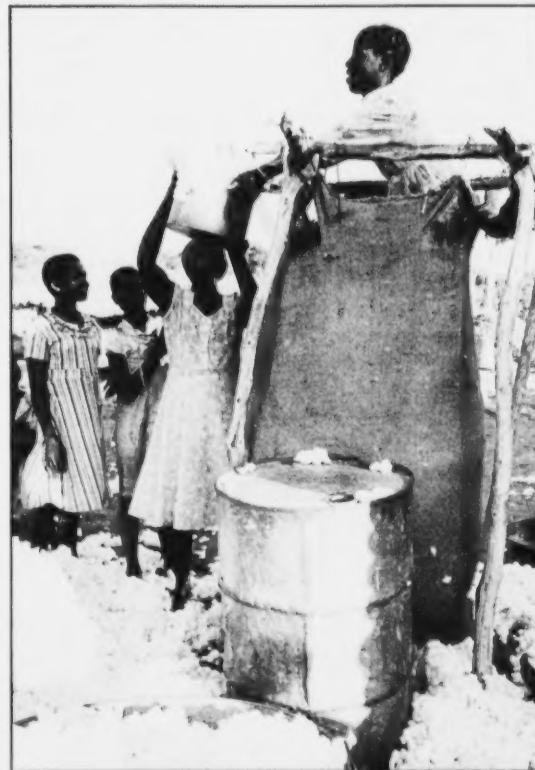
in the flooding of the world market by cotton sold at prices less than it costs to produce. This has depressed prices to levels at which competitors struggle to survive.

With low labour costs and small manageable plots, farmers in West and Central Africa are among the lowest-cost producers of cotton in the world. The International Cotton Advisory Committee puts the cost of producing a pound of cotton in Burkina Faso at 21 US cents compared to 73 cents in the US itself. However, state subsidies guarantee a minimum price to US farmers — currently about 52 cents per pound — regardless of what happens to world

Loading bales of cotton in Zimbabwe: Northern subsidies make it harder for African farmers to compete.

prices. US farmers also receive additional payments to top up their income to a target price level. As a result, they continue to expand cotton production — by 42 per cent between 1998 and 2001 — oblivious to almost five years of depressed world prices. Last year, partly due to the continuous flooding of the market by US cotton, world cotton prices fell to 42 cents per pound, far below the long-term average of 72 cents. During the 2001/02 season, the US government paid more to its cotton farmers in supports than the value of the harvested crop — \$3.9 bn in subsidies for a crop valued at \$3 bn.

The only comparative advantage cotton growers in the US have is access to subsidies, without which they could not compete internationally, notes the director-general of Senegal's state-owned cotton enterprise, Mr. Ahmed Bachir Diop. "Our farmers are more competitive on the world market because, without subsidies, we are able to produce quality cotton at production costs that beat all competitors...."



Unfair advantage

Northern subsidies place poor African farmers at a big disadvantage, notes the Oxfam report: "By driving down prices for these farmers, US taxpayers — along with their European counterparts in other product groups — bear a direct responsibility for poverty in Africa." It charges that US subsidies directly led to losses amounting to more than \$300 mn in potential revenue in sub-Saharan Africa during the 2001/02 season. US subsidies have a major influence on the world market because a large proportion of US production — more than 50 per cent — is exported, making the country the largest exporter by a wide margin.

As recently as May 2002, the US passed legislation to further increase the amount the government pays farmers. The new Farm Act provides an additional \$83 bn in farm expenditure, above the \$100 bn spent on existing programmes. Cotton growers, mainly comprising corporate agricultural companies, are expected

to receive an additional \$2.5 bn annually during the next 6 years.

This has inflamed an already raging controversy around agricultural subsidies, and has stirred anger in developing countries. Brazil has lodged a legal challenge against the US at the World Trade Organization (WTO), charging that Washington is in breach of a "peace clause" in the organization's Agreement on Agriculture. The clause, ironically introduced at the insistence of the US and the European Union (EU) during the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, protects a country from challenge to its subsidy regimes as long as it does not raise them beyond levels set in 1992. Brazil is challenging US cotton subsidies because, it charges, the figure paid out in 2002 is double that of 1992. The WTO limits overall US spending on certain types of farm programmes to \$19 bn annually. However, utilizing a complex web of farm supports, subsidies and credits, the country actually spends about \$49 bn annually.

But the debate over agricultural subsidies is often clouded by legal language and technical jargon. US officials insist their country is in compliance because its subsidies (those that fall under WTO rules) do not distort international trade. US officials also accuse developing countries of lumping all US subsidies in a single basket, even though WTO rules lay out different schedules for different types of supports. But leaders and activists in developing countries insist the US is not playing fair.

Ignoring WTO rules

"Several Central and West African nations are victims of injustice by the US and EU," says President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso. "These countries subsidize their agricultural producers, ignoring the rules of the WTO. Such practices are undermining the fragile national economies of countries that depend on cotton." Burkina Faso earned 57 per cent of its export revenue from cotton last year, while neighbouring Benin earned 75 per cent.

There is growing consensus that much of the blame also lies with the shortcomings of the WTO pact that was intended to fairly govern trade in agricultural products, the Agreement on Agriculture. The agreement, which came into

force in 1995, in theory requires all member countries to reduce subsidies that hinder trade. But numerous loopholes, and rules weighted in favour of the more dominant members of the WTO, have not only allowed industrial countries to avoid reducing agricultural subsidies, but to continue raising them in some cases.

US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick has repeatedly told the media that the US is not doing anything illegal, but simply taking advantage of the limits set in the WTO agreements. "If you want us to change, sit down at the table with us. We are going to negotiate in America's best interest."

The Agreement on Agriculture is currently under renegotiation in Geneva and is scheduled for completion by 2005. This new round of negotiations was launched in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001, when industrial nations agreed, for the first time, to comprehensive negotiations with a view to completely phase

out agricultural subsidies. In the statement, the organizations called for new rules to allow poor countries to introduce import controls on agricultural goods produced unfairly. "Hypocrisy and double standards still rule the day," said Mr. Bob van Dillen of Catholic Aid Agencies, one of the 50 groups that signed the statement.

Aid undermined

One of the main criticisms against agricultural subsidies is that they work directly against efforts by donor nations, including the US, to combat poverty in developing countries. An estimated 96 per cent of the world's farmers live in developing countries, with some 2.5 billion people depending on agriculture for a livelihood. Many seek an opportunity to trade their way out of poverty through a fair trading system. But over the years, unfavourable trade terms have been a major factor in the erosion of the market share of poor nations. According to the WTO, the share of developing countries in world agricultural exports fell from 40 per cent in 1961 to 35 per cent last year.

US subsidies: who benefits?

In theory, US agricultural subsidies are supposed to keep producer prices low and benefit consumers down the line. However, critics charge that US subsidies are regularly used to keep less efficient domestic producers sheltered from foreign competition. These subsidies are often applied together with trade tariffs, preventing cheaper products from entering the US market and thus making certain goods more expensive for US consumers. For instance, subsidies and supply restrictions limit the amount of cheaply produced Caribbean sugar entering the US. While raw sugar prices in the US averaged 21.17 cents per pound during the first quarter of 2002, on the world market they averaged 7.12 cents. And despite the lower production costs of foreign sugar, the US requires the price of imported sugar to match domestically produced sugar.

A Washington-based think-tank, the Cato Institute, reports that despite claims by farm lobbyists that government supports target small farmers and vulnerable communities, at least 58 per cent of US farmers do not get subsidies. Producers of five crops — wheat, soybeans, maize, rice and cotton — receive 90 per cent of all federal farm handouts. In the 2001/02 agricultural year, farmers received \$230 for each acre of cotton, compared to \$40-50 for wheat and maize. According to the US Department of Agriculture, more than 73 per cent of cotton subsidies go to the richest 10 per cent of farmers in the sector. The richest 1 per cent collect 25 per cent of subsidies.

out agricultural subsidies. However, continuing differences have stalled progress in the talks so far (see page 23).

By February 2003, the chasm between developing and developed countries had not narrowed, prompting a group of 50 civil society groups from around the world to issue a statement condemning the continued reluctance by industrial countries to negotiate areas of devel-

Because the economies of many poor countries depend overwhelmingly on just one or a few products, they are especially vulnerable to declines in commodity prices. The impact of the collapse of world cotton prices, for example, has fallen heavily on Central and West Africa, a region highly reliant on the crop for export earnings. Cotton production in the region has multiplied by five since the early

1970s, and about 95 per cent of the region's cotton is exported. Nine West and Central African countries together account for 15 per cent of global cotton exports. Oxfam reports that eight of these countries incurred 65 per cent of the \$300 mn loss in potential revenue in all of sub-Saharan Africa in 2001 due to the poor cotton prices. Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire were hit hardest.

"Frankly, we are starting to doubt whether rich countries really want to reduce poverty in developing countries," notes a joint statement against agricultural subsidies by cotton producers' federations in Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali. Despite declarations of intent to reduce poverty in poor countries, domestic policies in rich nations have often had the opposite effect. In West Africa, losses in export revenue outstrip the amount of economic assistance provided by Washington. Mali received \$37.7 mn in US aid in 2001 but incurred losses of \$43 mn due in large part to US subsidies, Oxfam reports. The 25,000 cotton farmers in the US receive more in subsidies than the entire gross domestic product

of Burkina Faso — one of the world's poorest countries, where more than 2 million people depend on cotton for their livelihood.

"There is no point in giving with one hand and taking with the other," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the World Food Summit in June 2002, commenting on the impact of agricultural subsidies. "You put yourself in the shoes of a small developing country which cannot export its agriculture products because of restrictions and tariffs, a small developing country that cannot compete on the world market even if it could export, because the richer farmers in the richer countries are heavily subsidized."

Industrial countries also have been criticized for applying double standards by erecting high tariffs in agriculture, an area of export importance to developing countries, while at the same time compelling developing countries to open their own markets. Precisely with the intent of promoting free market policies in Africa, the US passed the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000. It provides preferential access to the US market to countries that liberalize trade, promote the rule of law and adopt free market policies. Even though more than 30 countries are deemed to have qualified for AGOA, Africa only constitutes 2 per cent of US merchandise imports. African agriculture ministers from West and Central Africa who met in Côte d'Ivoire in June 2002 noted that conditions attached to AGOA make the measure counter-productive because it offers market access to African textiles in exchange for buying US cotton.

European Union no better

When critics cite the US for the negative impact of its subsidies, Washington often deflects criticism to the 15-member EU,

charging that subsidies in that region are far worse than its own. Subsidies and other supports to farmers in the EU amounted to an estimated \$93 bn last year — nearly double the \$49 bn the US spent. To illustrate the

absurdity of the subsidies in relation to human development, World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern uses the example of an average European cow, which receives \$2.50 per day in subsidies while 75 per cent of Africans live on less than \$2 a day. These subsidies have allowed the region to dominate world trade even in the most

"It is hypocritical to preach the advantages of free trade and free markets and then erect obstacles in precisely those markets in which developing countries have a comparative advantage."

— Nicholas Stern
chief economist, World Bank

unlikely of agricultural products.

"Some of the results are bizarre," says Mr. Stern. "We see sugar beets grown in Finland whilst poor sugar cane producers and cutters in the tropics struggle to make a living." Even though its production costs are more than double those of countries with a natural comparative advantage such as Brazil, Thailand and Mozambique, the EU is now the second largest sugar exporter from being a net importer 30 years ago. The EU spends about \$3.3 bn annually in supports on sugar exports, and in mid-2002 was paying its processors a guaranteed price three times that offered on the world market. Due to EU subsidies, prices on the world sugar market have fallen 17 per cent, the World Bank reports.

Countries such as Mozambique, struggling to revive its sugar exports following the end of a civil war, do not stand a chance. More than 23,000 people are employed in Mozambique's sugar sector, making it the single largest source of employment. The country's major economic goal is to rehabilitate its mills and increase the number of those employed in the sector to 40,000. But it has to contend with poor world prices and the inability to out-compete the EU, even in African markets. The EU exported 770,000 tonnes of sugar to Algeria and 150,000 tonnes to Nigeria last year.

"Interestingly, in the countries where they subsidize, only about 5 per cent of the population are farmers," notes the National Union of Cotton Farmers of Burkina Faso. "Here, farmers represent some 80 per cent of a population that is becoming increasingly impoverished on land that is itself becoming poorer, without the least help from the state."



Nigerian groundnut farmer:
Selling his crop at a decent
price is more beneficial than
receiving foreign aid.

Mounting opposition

While the issue has generally played out in the negotiating rooms of the WTO, in recent times the campaign against agricultural subsidies has broadened into growing global opposition. From small-scale farmers in Africa to government ministers, non-governmental organizations, movements protesting some of the effects of globalization and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the rallying call is the same — industrial countries must

The Bank notes that the effect of Northern subsidies undermines some of its work. Burkina Faso for instance incurred losses of \$27 mn in potential revenue last year, roughly the same amount it saved in debt repayments under the Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, a programme to reduce poor countries' debts. The Bank also notes that full elimination of agricultural protection and subsidies in rich countries would increase global trade by 17 per cent. As a result, agricultural exports from low- and middle-income countries would grow by 24 per cent and rural incomes in these countries would be boosted by 6 per cent, or about \$60 bn.

As international opposition grows, the issue of agricultural subsidies is now a frequent agenda item at global and regional meetings. In June 2002, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien told the annual Group of 8 Summit that the biggest favour the North could do for Africa would be to lower subsidies and tariffs. At last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, negotiators from developing countries wanted a declaration calling for the rapid elimination of subsidies. But those from industrial nations,

impact of agricultural subsidy policies on West and Central African countries and their populations," the ministers declared.

Seeking redress

However, there is still no common position on the continent on how best to seek redress for the current crisis. A number of proposals are emerging. Farmers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal recently called on their governments and on the West African Economic and Monetary Union to file "petitions" with the WTO in support of Brazil's legal action against US subsidies. Oxfam notes that on the basis of data in its report, Central and West African producers have strong grounds to claim \$334 mn in compensation for lost earnings for the period 1998-2001.

No African nation has yet filed a legal suit against agricultural subsidies at the WTO. Many are cash-strapped, dependent on aid and debt relief from the very countries they would be challenging. Many are also wary of the potential for retaliatory action.

Rather than confront industrial countries, others, including Mr. Diop of Senegal's state cotton enterprise, have raised the idea of negotiating for compensation from industrial nations for losses caused by their subsidies.

Some African countries have attempted to protect fragile domestic markets by raising import charges. Senegal imposed a 20 per cent surcharge on cheaper rice that flooded the market after the country had reduced tariffs to 10 per cent in 1995. To protect their cotton sectors from collapse, West and Central African countries spend an estimated \$60 mn annually on cotton subsidies. But there are limits to such expenditure, as governments also need to finance priority areas such as health and education. In addition, conditions imposed under IMF economic reforms limit government spending to agreed budgetary targets.

Another option is to continue negotiating for new, favourable terms at the current talks on the WTO agriculture agreement. At those negotiations, developing countries are pushing for a binding timetable to eliminate subsidies.

"What is disgusting to us is that the rules prohibiting subsidies were supported and organized within the WTO by the same powers that are today giving subsidies to their farmers," notes Burkina Faso's Agriculture Minister Salif Diallo. "There's something wrong somewhere." ■



Sugarcane field in Kenya: Due to EU subsidies, prices on the world sugar market have fallen 17 per cent.

remove restrictive policies that continue to prevent poor nations from benefiting from trade.

"It is hypocritical to preach the advantages of free trade and free markets and then erect obstacles in precisely those markets in which developing countries have a comparative advantage," Mr. Stern of the World Bank told the Centre for Economic Studies at Munich University, Germany, in November. "That hypocrisy does not go unnoticed in developing countries."

He noted that the US Farm Act and a recent agreement in Europe to delay the reform of the EU common agricultural policy "are deeply damaging." It had been largely expected that the reform of the policy would initiate subsidy reductions.

mainly the EU, walked out of those meetings. In outrage, farmers groups and civil society organizations dumped heaps of European sugar outside cafés used by delegates.

In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in June, agriculture ministers from West and Central Africa expressed fears that under the current unfavourable conditions, their nations face the risk of being ejected from the world market by less competitive, highly subsidized countries. They recommended the establishment of a regional coalition to defend the interests of the region within multilateral institutions such as the WTO.

"Advocacy and lobbying activities should be carried out at the international level on the

New strategies to combat famine, disease and rural poverty

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To make progress in all these areas, Mr. Annan adds, it will be essential to help African governments strengthen governance, "by rebuilding the capacity of the state to provide essential public services. Where once we spoke of capacity building, today we speak of capacity replenishment."

This broad approach is consistent with the goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the long-term development framework adopted by Africa in 2001 and endorsed unanimously the following year by the UN General Assembly. NEPAD also emphasizes addressing agriculture's structural constraints, noting further that improved agricultural performance is not only essential for food security and rural advancement, but also a "prerequisite of economic development," given agriculture's importance in most African economies.

To bear fruit, the UN Secretary-General concludes, a systematic, comprehensive and targeted approach to rural development will need to be sustained for years. And it will require that African countries and the international community, including the richest nations of the G-8, work together. Developing and implementing such an approach, he says, will be a "crucial test" for NEPAD. ■

Eradicating tsetse flies from Africa

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The one hope for eradication of the tsetse fly that seems feasible is the SIT method. IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei told the UN General Assembly in November 2002. The IAEA, he said, supports the efforts of African governments to "implement their tsetse eradication campaign throughout the continent, with the expanded application of the radiation-induced sterile technique."

Fly sterilization

Under the SIT method, the tsetse population in a given area is first reduced by about 90 per cent using traditional techniques, such as traps and insecticides. Meanwhile, other male flies are raised and sterilized in laboratories by exposing them to short bursts of gamma radiation from a cobalt-60 source. These sterile flies are then released into the targeted area so that the remaining population gradually dies out. Governments are urged to identify "pockets" of infested areas in which they can systematically work to eradicate the flies and ensure sustained control to prevent reinvasion.

Aside from its demonstrated effectiveness, there are other compelling reasons for this method. To date, scientists have been unable to develop a vaccine for humans or cattle and the parasite is becoming increasingly resistant to existing drugs. Moreover, the drugs that prevent or treat the disease are highly toxic or difficult to administer.

Still, some scientists oppose the sterilization

project, arguing that it will be costly, is not based on proven scientific theory or is simply unable to achieve the goal of eradication. According to Mr. Kabayo, "One source of opposition is really over semantics, that we use the word 'eradication' in our title. But this word is only to emphasize the ultimate objective."

Other scientists raise environmental concerns. They argue that the tsetse fly is part of the continent's ecosystem and that its removal would bring an explosion of livestock production and overgrazing. Mr. Kabayo calls this view a reflection of "ecological imperialism." He argues that the only reason people keep large herds is because of the trypanosome threat. Once it is removed, they will shift to fewer head of more productive species such as the Friesian cows now raised in Zanzibar.

Increasingly, African governments are acting on the problem, whether or not they have outside help. "In the past," notes Mr. Kabayo, "projects were foreign-driven. We found that was the wrong approach. As soon as foreign support was withdrawn, the projects collapsed, with no knowledge for continuity." The difference this time is that PATTEC is urging countries to include the goal of tsetse fly eradication in their national budgets.

Eradication campaigns already are under way in identified infested areas in Ethiopia, Botswana, Mali and Burkina Faso. Mr. Kabayo believes that with sustained commitment, they can make major strides towards the ultimate goal of tsetse eradication, along with the resulting benefits of improved health and agricultural productivity. ■

Senegal: to fight hunger, modernize farming

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With Senegal's limited water sources and fragile topsoil, talk about intensifying agricultural production through greater use of fertilizer and other inputs naturally raises concerns about environmental sustainability. Learning from past mistakes, especially in the irrigation projects in the northern river valleys, there now is greater emphasis on careful environmental assessments, use of organic fertilizers and technologies that

safeguard rather than harm Senegal's natural resources. President Wade is promoting the notion of "ecological security," which combines environmental management with poverty reduction and local empowerment, including participatory mechanisms and the strengthening of land rights, especially for rural women.

Such social considerations must be at the heart of any agricultural policy, argues Prof. Moustapha Kassé, a prominent Senegalese development expert. In narrow economic terms,

it might make sense to liquidate unprofitable state enterprises and allow the groundnut sector to decline. "But what will the farmers do?" he asks. How would the country prevent an increase in rural poverty and even greater migration to the cities?

"It is impossible to transform agriculture without a fuller social vision," Prof. Kassé concludes. "Today, it is vital to elaborate an agricultural strategy that is global, coherent and focused." ■

Global agricultural trade talks stall

Africans find negotiations a tough row to hoe

By Michael Fleshman

The millions of people now at risk of starvation in Africa are a stark reminder of the region's stake in negotiations under way at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on reforming global trade in agriculture. But three years after they began, the talks are effectively at an impasse, with developed countries still bitterly divided over subsidies and protectionism. African demands for "pro-poor" agreements to improve market access, strengthen food security, attract rural investment and protect domestic markets from unfair competition, meanwhile, remain on the back burner.

In early March, after an informal summit of trade and agriculture ministers in Tokyo failed to make significant progress, the chair of the WTO committee on agriculture, Mr. Stuart Harbinson, acknowledged that "little common ground emerged on fundamental issues." With a critical WTO trade ministers meeting in Cancún, Mexico, just months away, some African trade ministers have cautioned that lack of progress on developing countries' concerns puts at risk the entire trade agenda set at the 2001 WTO meeting in Doha, which promised to make the current round of trade liberalization talks a "development" round (see *Africa Recovery*, December 2001).

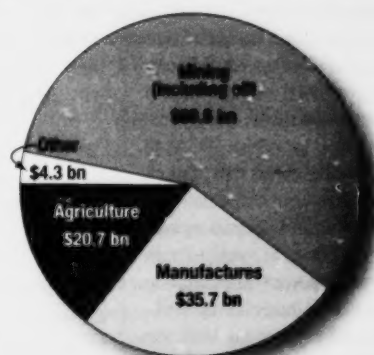
'You liberalize, we subsidize'

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of agriculture and the trade in agricultural products for Africa. Farming employs some 70 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's work force and generates an average 30 per cent of the region's gross domestic product. Yet rural Africans are among the poorest people in the world.

Production in much of Africa is hampered by poor soils, erratic rainfall and severe under-investment in rural infrastructure and inputs. These domestic difficulties have been exacerbated by the current global trade rules in agriculture. Those policies, contained in the Uruguay Round of trade agreements, maintain an array of tariff and non-tariff barriers to African exports and have permitted heavily subsidized European and US food products — sometimes sold below production costs — to undercut African farmers in both their domestic and export markets (see page 18).

It is widely recognized that the global agricultural economy needs fundamental reform, notes a recent UN Development Programme study, *Making Global Trade Work for People*. But there is no agreement on how, or how fast,

Africa's world merchandise trade, 2001



Source: UN Africa Recovery from WTO data.

to proceed. Powerful constituencies and agribusiness interests in developed countries, the study asserts, have helped block progress by fiercely protecting their markets and subsidies. As a result, almost 60 years after the first tentative steps were taken to regulate the trade in farm products, agriculture remains among the least liberalized and most distorted merchandise sectors in the world.

Ironically, African agricultural markets are already much more liberalized than those of their wealthy trading partners. For more than two decades, African governments have been forced through structural adjustment policies and bilateral aid and trade conditions to eliminate producer subsidies and reduce tariffs at deeper and faster rates than required by the Uruguay rules. By the time the Uruguay agreements are set for full implementation in 2005, the study notes, African agricultural tariffs will average 20 per cent, compared to 36 per cent in Northern markets.

Even that figure can disguise the true impact of US, European and Japanese protectionist policies, however, as tariffs on individ-

Development agenda 'just a slogan'?

Negotiations to amend the WTO rules on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) on essential medicines, former TRIPS Council Chairman Boniface Chidyausiku told *Africa Recovery*, were never taken seriously by developed countries. "It was a pure exercise to stem the tide of opposition back home," he said, noting the increased public pressure on Northern governments to respond to the health crisis in Africa. "The hopes we had for the TRIPS agreement and public health came to naught."



Boniface Chidyausiku

Much the same fate has befallen other key aspects of the Doha development agenda, he asserted. When the Africa Group presented detailed proposals for implementation of existing special and differential provisions, "we were told by our developed country partners that 'no, we can't read it. It's too big. Can you reprioritize the areas you think we can look into?' We felt insulted, really."

These issues, combined with the disagreements over agriculture, he cautioned, made agreement at the upcoming Cancún trade ministers meeting much less likely. "If there is no progress in areas of concern to developing countries, I don't see why they will make concession at Cancún." To call the WTO trade agenda a "development agenda," he concluded, "was just a slogan. I don't see anything development-oriented that has come out of all the talks we have had. In terms of development, forget it."

ual products of interest to African exporters can sometimes be as high as 400 and 500 per cent. Some non-governmental development advocates have derided the developed countries for pursuing a "you liberalize, we subsidize" approach to agricultural trade.

Africa's agenda

Eliminating these inequities, Mr. Cornelius Mwalwanda told *Africa Recovery*, is "the key issue of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations for most African countries." Mr. Mwalwanda, a trade expert at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, added that "failure to liberalize will perpetuate the dismal economic situation currently prevailing in many African countries.... Poverty alleviation in Africa cannot be achieved without effectively dealing with the livelihoods of rural farmers."

Since the launch of the agriculture talks in early 2000, the Africa Group of WTO negotiators has submitted two sets of proposals. Observers say they are among the most comprehensive and detailed of any country or trading bloc. Many African countries have also submitted individual proposals, or joined with other countries and blocs on specific issues.

Many of the African proposals address concerns in three of the areas mandated for reform at Doha: securing "substantial improvements" in market access, reduction ("with a view to phasing out") all export subsidies and "substantial reduction" of domestic subsidies deemed "trade distorting."

Key aspects of Africa's agenda at the agriculture talks include:

- rapid elimination of export subsidies
- reductions in, and tighter criteria for, domestic "trade distorting" subsidies in developed countries
- reduction of tariff peaks and escalations on developing country exports
- tariff- and quota-free market access for least developed countries (LDCs)
- implementation of existing measures to help LDCs and food-importing developing countries overcome any negative effects of liberalization
- expansion of special measures for developing countries, including use of domestic supports and tariffs, to assist small-scale

farmers and enhance food security

- prohibition of market liberalization and subsidy reduction requirements exceeding WTO standards by donors and international financial institutions
- standardization and rationalization of food safety and processing requirements
- maintenance of existing market access preferences under bilateral, and multilateral trade agreements, such as the US's Africa Growth and Opportunity Act.

ments, use tariff barriers and subsidies to promote diversification, employment and infrastructure development, and have access to a simplified "safeguard" mechanism to raise duties on surges of imports of crops essential to domestic food security.

Other provisions would link further market-opening measures by developing countries to substantial elimination of subsidies and protectionist policies by wealthy countries. The pricing of subsidized agricultural exports below the cost

of production, a practice known as "dumping," would be banned, and all S&D agreements, most of which are currently optional, would become binding.

Africa asserts its interests

The scope and sophistication of Africa's engagement at the WTO, Mr. Mwalwanda said, demonstrates that "African countries have progressively come to play a dynamic and pro-active role" in trying to shape the global trading regime and are now "fully engaged" in the talks on agriculture and other sectors of vital interest. The same is true of Africa's institutional capacity, in

which governments have greatly strengthened their technical and policymaking machinery, in partnership with the ECA, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, UNDP, WTO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

"African countries have learned the importance of active participation in the WTO negotiations," Mr. Mwalwanda noted. At previous negotiations, he acknowledged, African countries often felt ill-prepared to challenge the major trading powers. Following Africa's de facto veto of new negotiations at the 1999 Seattle WTO meeting, however, "this situation has changed dramatically. African countries are now taken very seriously." The inclusion of development concerns in the Doha agenda, he said, proved that, "together as a bloc, the voice of Africa can be heard."

Failed 'litmus tests'

The extent to which the WTO member states have genuinely embraced those concerns, however, remains very much in doubt. To secure the agreement of African and other developing countries at Doha on a new round of negotiations on issues of interest to developed countries, the WTO agreed to review

Agriculture in poor African countries, 1999

	% of GDP	Imports (\$ mn)	Exports (\$ mn)	% of total employment
Sierra Leone	50.1	133	10	63
Niger	41.7	138	102	88
Ethiopia	47.9	169	477	83
Burkina Faso	31.5	120	158	92
Burundi	51.7	22	59	91
Mozambique	37.3	204	40	81
Guinea-Bissau	64.9	21	22	83
Mali	46.8	105	288	81
Central African Republic	51.5	39	32	73
Rwanda	45.2	80	48	90

Source: UN Economic Commission for Africa, UN Development Programme.

In addition, many African and other developing countries have called for adoption of what is known as a "development box" of rules and exemptions that would allow poor countries to enhance food security, protect domestic markets from subsidized imports, encourage rural investment and protect the livelihoods of small farmers. The proposals are an elaboration of an existing WTO principle, "special and differential treatment" (S&D), which is intended to help developing countries in implementing their Uruguay commitments and ease their integration into the liberalizing global economy. S&D provisions typically grant developing countries more time to reach compliance with WTO rules or permit slower and smaller reductions in tariffs.

Many development box proposals go beyond current S&D agreements and are supported by many, but not all, African countries. Advocates maintain that developing countries require much greater policy flexibility in harnessing their agricultural sectors to poverty alleviation and other development goals. They propose that developing countries be allowed to exempt staple food crops entirely from tariff reductions and other liberalization commit-

developing countries' concerns about the implementation of existing trade rules.

The WTO also agreed to begin talks to entrench and operationalize existing S&D measures, and, most urgently, to ensure that WTO patent rules would not block access by poor countries to affordable medicines. The organization further agreed to complete negotiations on these two issues by the end of 2002. Agreement on those issues and real progress in the agriculture talks, said Mr. Mwalwanda, were seen by developing countries as "litmus tests of the political will of the developed countries ... to a true development round."

But a growing list of missed deadlines for agreement on these "litmus test" issues has fuelled scepticism about the North's commitment to development concerns. In agriculture, negotiators failed to meet a crucial 31 March deadline for agreement on the broad outline, or "modalities," of a final deal on trade liberalization.

A draft modalities paper prepared by Mr. Harbinson in February was criticized by

"little collective guidance" from member states on how to proceed with a revised modalities proposal.

Negotiations on S&D and medicines have fared no better. On 3 December, talks about strengthening S&D deadlocked when developing countries, led by the Africa Group, rejected as insufficient an offer by the "Quad Group" (the EU, US, Japan and Canada) to accept 27 of the developing countries' 84 demands. Negotiators were unable to agree even on whether to continue discussions.

Although Quad Group ambassadors blamed African intransigence for the impasse, one African negotiator characterized the Quad Group offer as "peanuts." The issue will likely be added to the Cancun agenda in September, prompting senior WTO officials to caution about the danger of "back loading" too many unresolved issues on the summit.

Negotiations in the WTO Council on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to permit poor countries to export

the EU to allow the World Health Organization to approve exports for other illnesses on a case-by-case basis was rejected by the developing country group as inconsistent with the intent of the Doha declaration, with African countries again in the lead.

"The only concession we got as developing countries at Doha was the declaration on TRIPS and public health," the former chairman of the TRIPS council, Zimbabwean UN Ambassador Boniface Chidyausiku, told *Africa Recovery*. "There's nothing developmental about Doha. The lack of engagement we have experienced from our development partners is an indication of their lack of seriousness about the issues we have put on the table."

'Shadow boxing' in Geneva

Ambassador Chidyausiku's frustration is shared by a growing number of African trade officials. At a meeting of East African trade ministers late last year, the Kenyan trade and industry minister, Mr. Nicholas Biwott, accused developed countries of obstructing progress on the Doha trade agenda and called for far-reaching reform in agriculture. A few weeks later, South Africa's chief trade negotiator, Mr. Xavier Carim, told reporters that there is "grave and widespread concern" among developing countries that the lack of progress in the agriculture talks could lead to the failure of the Doha agenda.

"Agriculture is probably the most important negotiating issue for most countries," he said, and especially important for development in Africa. He charged that developed countries are "shadow boxing" in Geneva instead of negotiating, and are conducting a "one-sided debate" to the detriment of African interests. "By protecting their farmers from competition, they are holding back Africa's development."

For many years, developing countries have been urged to eliminate subsidies, while developed countries persist with their own subsidies, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted on 14 April, at a high-level meeting that included WTO representatives. "I urge developed countries to dramatically reduce agricultural subsidies, without delay.... It would provide a much-needed boost to the Doha negotiations, signalling to developing countries that they can still hope for the development round they were promised."



Loading rice at a dock in Cotonou, Benin: Trade in agricultural products is vitally important for Africa's development.

virtually everyone. European and Japanese officials rejected the paper's call for steep reductions in export subsidies as "unbalanced" and accused Mr. Harbinson of tilting towards the US position. US trade officials in turn, accused the Europeans and Japanese of obstruction. The senior US trade negotiator, Mr. Robert Zoellick, said that the Europeans would have to accept major agriculture reforms "if they want to get Doha done."

Mr. Harbinson put the best face on the impasse, noting progress in technical areas and on some specific tariff issues. But he acknowledged that little movement was visible on the main issues and that he had received

cheaper generic copies of vital medicines have also collapsed. Existing trade rules allow countries facing medical emergencies to manufacture essential drugs without permission from the patent holder, but only for domestic consumption. The Doha declaration committed the WTO to amend TRIPS to allow poor countries without manufacturing capacity, including many in Africa, to gain access to generics. Despite one extension, the negotiations finally ground to a halt in late December over US demands that such "parallel exports" be permitted only for the three diseases mentioned in the Doha declaration — HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. A final compromise proposal by

A F R I C A AGENDA

21-22 May 2003, Edinburgh (Scotland) — Remaking Law in Africa: Transnationalism, Persons and Rights. Tel (44-131) 650-3878, fax (44-131) 650-6535, e-mail <African.Studies@ed.ac.uk>.

22-24 May 2003, Kingston (Jamaica) — "Pan-Africanism at the Beginning of the 21st Century: New Century, Same Challenges." E-mail <all_african_students_conference@yahoo.com> or <marcusgarveymovement@hotmail.com>.

26-29 May 2003, Khartoum (Sudan) — Society for Women and AIDS in Africa — 9th International Conference, on the theme "Access to Care Treatment for Women, Children and Families in Africa." Contact Dr. Fathia A-Mahmoud, fax (249-11) 779087 or P.O. Box 1598, Al-Gasir Street, Khartoum, Sudan.

1-5 June 2003, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development/Annual Meeting of African Development Bank. Contact UNECA, tel (251-1) 517200, fax (251-1) 514416, e-mail <ecainfo@uneca.org>, Website <http://www.uneca.org>.

4-6 June 2003, Gaborone (Botswana) — Work-

shop on Growth Strategies for Poverty Reduction in Southern Africa. Contact UNECA, tel (251-1) 517200, fax (251-1) 514416, e-mail <ecainfo@uneca.org>, Website <http://www.uneca.org>.

5-6 June 2003, Nairobi (Kenya) — Second Dams and Development Forum. Tel (27-12) 426-4000, fax (27-21) 426-0036, e-mail <info@unepdams>.

8-12 June 2003, Green Bay (Wisconsin) — Sharing Indigenous Wisdom: An International Dialogue on Sustainable Development. Contact Nathan Fregien, e-mail <nfregien@menominee.edu>.

14-19 June 2003, Göteborg (Sweden) — Solar World Congress 2003. Tel (46-31) 818220, fax (46-31) 818224, e-mail <ISES2003@gbg.congrex.se>, Website <http://www.congrex.com/ISES2003>.

17-22 June 2003, Rutgers University, New Jersey (USA) — 4th World Congress of African Linguistics. Contact Oluseye Adesola, e-mail <adesola@eden.rutgers.edu>.

25-26 June 2003, Nairobi (Kenya) — International Aid and Trade Africa 2003 conference. Contact Mr. Wayne Fessey, tel. (44-1702) 551 556, e-mail <wayne.fessey@aidandtrade.com>, Website <http://www.aidandtrade.com>.

26-28 June 2003, Durban (South Africa) — XIV Africa Association of Political Science congress. The theme is "New Visions for Development in Africa." E-mail <aaps@mweb.co.zw> or <rugumamus@yahoo.com>.

4-12 July 2003, Maputo (Mozambique) — African Union Heads of State Summit. Contact Desmond

Orjiako, e-mail <d.t.orjiako@telecom.net>.

21-21 July 2003, Dakar (Senegal) — 4th International Conference and Exhibition on Traditional Medicine, on the theme "Traditional Healing and HIV/AIDS." Website <http://www.africa-first.com/4thICTM.asp>.

3-6 August 2003, Durban (South Africa) — Southern African AIDS Conference. Tel (27-12) 481-2074, fax (27-13) 481-2116, e-mail <aidsconference@samecial.org>.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

24-26 March 2003, Rome (Italy) — Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Adequate Food. Tel (39-06) 570-55475, e-mail <righttofood-IGWG@fao.org>.

26-28 March, Accra (Ghana) — NEPAD Civil Society. Contact NEPAD Secretariat, tel (27-11) 313 3716, fax (27-11) 313-3583, e-mail <africam@nepad.org>, Website <http://www.nepad.org>.

5-6 April, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — Regional follow-up meeting to UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS. Contact UNECA, tel (251-1) 517200, fax (251-1) 514416, e-mail <ecainfo@uneca.org>, Website <www.uneca.org>.

24-25 April 2003, Poortgebouw, Leiden (The Netherlands) — Youth and the Politics of Generational Conflict in Africa. Contact Marieke van Winden, tel (31-71) 527-358, fax (31-71) 527-3344, e-mail <winden@fsw.leidenunlv.nl>.

A F R I C A BOOKS

Gender, Justice, Development, and Rights, eds. Maxine Molyneux and Shahra Razavi (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2003; 400 pp; hb £50; pb £18.99)

Le NEPAD et les enjeux du développement en Afrique prefaces by Abdoulaye Wade et K. Y. Amoako (Maisonneuve & Larose, Paris, November 2002; 283 pp)

Governing Globalization: Issues and Institutions, ed. Deepak Nayyar (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2002; 412 pp; pb £19.99; hb £55)

Better Governance and Public Policy: Capability Building for Democratic Renewal in Africa, eds. Dele Olowu and Soumana Sako (Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, CT, US, January 2003; 288 pp; hb \$65; pb \$26.95)

Information and Communication Technologies for African Development: An Assessment of Progress and Challenges Ahead, ed. Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr. (United Nations ICT Task Force, New York, NY, 2003; 347 pp)

Eroding Local Capacity: International Humanitarian Action in Africa, eds. Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 203 pp)

Development from Below: A Namibian Case Study by Reinhart Kossler, Henning Melber and Per Strand (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala,

Sweden, 2003; 31 pp)

Government and Politics in Africa by William Tordoff (Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, New York, NY, 2002; 352 pp; pb £16.99)

Ethiopia, The Challenge of Democracy from Below, eds. Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; SEK 220; £16.95; \$27.95)

Fault-Lines in South African Democracy: Continuing Crises of Inequality and Injustice by Fred Hendricks (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 32pp)

Security and Politics in South Africa: The Regional Dimension by Peter Vale (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, US, January 2003; 260 pp; hb \$53)

The Dynamics of Resource Tenure in West Africa by Camilla Toulmin, Philippe Delville and Samba Traoré (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, US, 2002; 235 pp; pb \$64.95)

Ghana's Adjustment Experience: The Paradox of Reform by Eboe Hutchful (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, US, 2002; 288 pp; pb \$64.95)

A Case for Aid: Building a Consensus for Development Assistance (World Bank, Washington, DC, US, 2002; 228 pp; \$18.95)

Reforming the Global Financial Architecture: Issues and Proposals, ed. Yilmaz Akyuz (Zed Books, New York, 2002; 156 pp; pb \$25; hb \$69.95)

Minorities in the Millennium: Perspectives from Botswana, ed. I. Mazonde (Lighthouse Publishing, Botswana 2002; 144 pp)

Resource Alienation, Militarisation and Development: Case Studies from East African

Drylands, ed. Mustafa Babiker (OSSREA Publications, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2002; 207 pp)

Pastoral Resource Competition in Uganda: Case Studies into Commercial Livestock Ranching and Pastoral Institutions by Frank Muhereza and Peter Otim (OSSREA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2002; 192 pp)

Armed Struggle and Democracy: The Case of South Africa by Martin Legassick (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2002; 62 pp; SEK100, £16.95)

Media and Democracy in Africa, eds. Goran Hyden, Michael Leslie and Folu F. Ogundimu (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2002; 260 pp; SEK240, £7.95, \$12.95)

Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice by Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya (Africa World Press/The Red Sea Press, Lawrenceville, NJ, US, 2002; \$24.95)

We Are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post Apartheid South Africa by Ashwin Desai (Monthly Review Press, New York, 2002; 153 pp; \$19)

A Regional Approach to Financial Crisis Prevention: Lessons from Europe and Initiatives in Asia, Latin America and Africa, ed. Jan Joost Teunissen (FONDAD, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2002; 208 pp; €25)

Peacebuilding in Africa, ed. Christian Akani (Paragraphics, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 2002; 90 pp; \$12)

L'intégration régionale en Afrique centrale: bilan et perspectives prefaces by K.Y. Amoako, Martin Aristide Okouda, Jean Nkueté, Louis Sylvain Goma (Karthala, Paris, February 2003; 311 pp)

A F R I C A IN BRIEF

Don't lose sight of Africa's food crisis — WFP

As the international community gears up to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq, it should not divert its attention from the larger crisis affecting Africa, World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director James Morris told the UN Security Council in April.

The WFP's recently launched humanitarian operation in Iraq will cost an estimated \$1.3 bn over six months — the agency's single largest humanitarian operation ever — targeting many of the country's 27 million people. Meanwhile, nearly 40 million Africans are struggling against starvation due a combination of recurring drought, war, failed economic policies and the growing impact of HIV/AIDS on agricultural production. For Africa, the WFP needs \$1.8 bn this year, an amount equal to the agency's entire project budget last year. So far, it is \$1 bn short.

"How is it that we routinely accept a level of suffering and hopelessness in Africa we would never accept in any other part of the world?" Mr. Morris asked. "As much as I don't like it, I cannot escape the thought that we have a double standard."

The response so far has been limited. In Southern Africa, gripped by a prolonged drought and an AIDS epidemic that is killing off the most productive people, more than 620,000 tonnes of food have been distributed to 10 million people. However, in Zimbabwe, 4.7 million people — nearly half the country's population — need food aid. In Angola, where 1.8 million people require assistance, much of the country is littered with landmines, making movement difficult and cultivation unsafe.

In the Horn of Africa, 11 million Ethiopians require humanitarian relief and in neighbouring Eritrea 1.4 million people — two out of every three people — are short of food. There have been pledges totalling 70 per cent of requirements in Ethiopia, noted Mr. Morris. But, "in Eritrea, the funding situation is grim."

Food security is also deteriorating in the Western Sahel, the WFP notes. In Mauritania, Cape Verde, Gambia, Senegal and Mali, where 500,000 people are suffering from the effects of severe drought, emergency operations have raised only 40 per cent of their cash require-

ments. Elsewhere in West Africa, conflicts in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have disrupted agricultural production and produced large numbers of displaced people, both in those countries and in neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone. The WFP reports that emergency operations to feed displaced people in these four countries are still 40 per cent short of their funding needs.

Shortages of funds for other food emergencies around the world, such as Afghanistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, seem to further darken the outlook for Africa, said Mr. Morris. "Commitments to humanitarian aid are political choices. We must never again witness a famine of the proportions seen in Ethiopia in 1984/85," when about 1 million people died.

Water forum pledges support for Africa

Ministers attending the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan, in March issued a declaration pledging their "full support" for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). They vowed to back African regional and subregional initiatives to cope with the continent's difficult water situation.

Africa has the highest number of people in the world (in proportion to population) who do not have ready access to clean water or sanitation. Only 43 per cent of the African urban population has a house or yard water connection, and only 18 per cent is connected to a sewer. In rural areas, only 39 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and only 35 per cent to sanitation.

During the Kyoto forum, a Day of Africa highlighted plans for improving water resources management and access to adequate sanitation. It also addressed regional issues of water, poverty, health, food security, financing, shared water basins and NEPAD. At the end of the conference, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced the creation of a new Water Cooperation Facility. Based at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the facility will help finance efforts to prevent and resolve

disputes over freshwater access and use. According to the UN organization, there are 17 river or lake basins in the world with a "potential" for serious conflict during the next 5-10 years. Eight of them are in Africa, not counting the Nile basin, where disputes are already taking place.

Debt relief progressing, but still some snags

Since its inception in 1996, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) has reduced the outstanding debt stock of 26 countries, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, by two-thirds, the World Bank announced in its annual *Global Development Finance* report released in April. The reduction amounts to \$40 bn in net present value (representing the market value of the original debt, discounted as if it were paid now, in a lump sum).

Despite the debt reduction achieved so far, the report warns, "the deterioration in the global economic environment and the related decline in commodity prices have raised concerns about the ability of several HIPCs to reduce their debt burdens to sustainable levels." The World Bank considers a country's debt to be sustainable if the ratio between its total debt and its export earnings is less than 150 per cent, implying that it has enough export revenue to service its debt. Most African countries earn foreign currency through the sale of agricultural commodities, which, over the years, have been fetching lower and lower prices on the international market.

The report notes that challenges remain in terms of creditor participation in the HIPC initiative. Debt relief committed to 26 countries that have reached the debt forgiveness stage of the programme is 12 per cent below the total required. At least 24 creditor countries have not expressed an intention to provide debt relief, the report observes, and many commercial creditors "remain unwilling to participate in the initiative."

Despite HIPC, sub-Saharan Africa's total debt stood at \$204 bn last year, according to the report. This was down from a peak of \$231 bn in 1996, but still significantly above the \$177 bn registered at the start of the 1990s. Moreover, the steady decline in the region's debt since 1996 appears to have at least temporarily stalled, with the 2002 level almost the same as the \$203 bn recorded the year before.



A F R I C A WATCH

IRAQ

War putting Africa on 'back burner'?

South African leaders have been warning that the political and economic repercussions of the war in Iraq may move Africa's interests and concerns further down the international agenda. Speaking during a debate on the war in the country's National Assembly on 19 March, Deputy President Jacob Zuma warned that the war "has the potential to push Africa to the back burner in the international arena," and may "aggravate the misery and poverty in Africa and other parts of the developing world." In the same way, he said, the war might "reverse all our gains achieved through the NEPAD initiative," referring to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the continent's development framework.

A few days later, President Thabo Mbeki noted that the enormous humanitarian and reconstruction requirements in Iraq could draw away financial resources that might otherwise have gone to NEPAD. But, he added, diminished attention to Africa might also have the effect of forcing Africa to become more self-sufficient. "We will have to rely on ourselves, our own resources and our own efforts."

President Mbeki has appointed a special ministerial committee to investigate how the fluctuating oil price, other economic repercus-

sions and the security situation in the Middle East may affect South Africa. Similarly, at a meeting in early March of NEPAD heads of state (see page 8), Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo was mandated to set up a steering committee to examine the Iraq war's broader impact on Africa.

The International Monetary Fund, in its *World Economic Outlook* released in April, warns that as a result of the Iraq war, Africa may be hit by "a double blow from higher oil prices and lower non-fuel commodity prices, and in some cases a decline in tourism." ■

ENVIRONMENT

A lead-free Africa is 'in sight'

Most African countries will be using lead-free petrol, or come close to phasing out the hazardous heavy metal, within five years, according to a survey by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The UNEP survey reports that Egypt, Libya, Mauritius and Sudan are already fully lead-free, and indicates that Tunisia, the French territory of Réunion off Africa's east coast, and Morocco and Western Sahara will join them this year.

"This is one of, if not the first, concrete outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development," UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer said in February. The summit, held last year in Johannesburg, called for the rapid, global phasing out of the pollutant. African countries agreed several months earlier to phase out the use of leaded fuel by 2005.

Although about 90 per cent of the world's petrol supplies are now unleaded, the remaining

10 per cent is concentrated in developing countries, especially in Africa. "It has been known for many years that lead in petrol or gasoline is a serious health risk, particularly to children," Mr. Toepfer said. "This is why it has been phased out and banned in countries in Western Europe, North America, parts of the Far East and elsewhere. But much of Africa ... has lagged behind," including for technological reasons and a lack of awareness of the health risks. He added that the situation is rapidly changing and "a lead-free Africa is in sight." ■

ANGOLA

Aid for combatant demobilization

The World Bank has decided to grant Angola nearly \$50 mn to boost its reconstruction and economic recovery efforts, following decades of civil war. The bulk of the funds (\$33 mn) will help to support the government's programme for the demobilization, resettlement and reintegration of former combatants, as well as for rebuilding infrastructure, especially schools and clinics in communities where people are being resettled.

"From all indications, the government and other interested parties are committed to lasting peace. The grant signals that the World Bank supports this new dispensation and hopes to maintain this renewed trust between ourselves and the government," said Mr. Laurence Clarke, the World Bank's new country manager in Luanda. It is the World Bank's first financing agreement with Angola since 2000.

The grant comes amid growing concern over the slow delivery of assistance to an estimated 105,000 former combatants of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). These former rebels, along with 33,000 former government soldiers, have each been promised resettlement packages of blankets, seeds and tools worth \$100, as well as access to suitable land for resettlement. Citing financial difficulties for the delay, the government appealed in December for international support.

Reflecting concern among donor agencies over allegations of corruption in the Angolan administration, the remaining \$17 mn of the World Bank grant will be allocated to increasing transparency in public resource management. Mr. Clarke noted that one condition for the disbursement of any money is that the government set up an autonomous financial and auditing system. "There will be regular auditing to assess just exactly how the money is being used," he said. ■

APPOINTMENTS

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed **Mr. Albert Tévoédjrè**, of Benin, as his special envoy for Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Tévoédjrè began his career at independence in 1960 as Benin's minister of information. In 1965 he became secretary-general of the Union of African and Malagasy States. He joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) that same year, and in 1974 was appointed director of the International Institute for Social Studies, with the rank of deputy director-general of the ILO. With the return of multiparty elections in Benin in 1991, Mr. Tévoédjrè became a prominent political figure, and from 1996 to 1999 served as Benin's minister for planning, economic rehabilitation and employment promotion.



The Executive Board of the World Health Organization has nominated **Dr. Jong Wook Lee** of the Republic of Korea to lead the organization as director-general for five years, starting 21 July 2003. Dr. Lee, an epidemiologist and expert in vaccines, tuberculosis and diseases associated with poverty, joined WHO in 1983. In 1994 he became head of the WHO Global Programme for Vaccines and Immunizations and in 2000 was appointed director of the Stop TB Programme, a coalition of more than 250 international partners, including WHO member states, donors agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses and foundations. Dr. Lee's nomination will be submitted for ratification to the 56th World Health Assembly, which meets in Geneva from 19-28 May 2003.

